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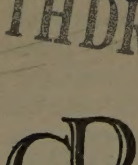
# THE CASE FOR EDWARD DE VERE 17TH EARL OF OXFORD AS "SHAKESPEARE"

# The Case for Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford as "Shakespeare"

*By*

PERCY ALLEN

WITHDRAWN



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## AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

THE Author suggests that readers who are genuinely interested in determining this difficult question of the authorship of the Shakesperean plays will find such value as there may be in this volume enhanced, or made more easily accessible, by a preliminary reading of two other books—Mr. J. T. Looney's "Shakespeare Identified" (Mr. Cecil Palmer), and Capt. B. M. Ward's "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford" (Mr. John Murray). The pages that follow are, in fact, a continuation of, or development from, both those valuable works.

Excepting instances in which the text makes it clear that my reference is to the actor of Stratford-on-Avon, the names Shakespeare and Oxford are used interchangeably in this book.

The double numbering, used in references to the sonnets—e.g. 26/12—means that sonnet XII, in the quarto sequence, has become sonnet 26, in Sir Denys Bray's rhyme-linked order, which I accept as correct. My thanks are due to Sir Denys Bray, and also to his publishers, Messrs. Methuen, for permission to make use of a work which, in my judgment, is indispensable to all serious students of Shakespeare's sonnets.

I have to thank my brother, Mr. Ernest Allen, for several valuable hints, and suggestions, concerning Oxford's connection with various plays, and also with "Venus and Adonis"; and my especially warm appreciation goes to Col. B. R. Ward, C.M.G., and Capt. B. M. Ward, not only for permission to use freely their books, and articles, cited in the accompanying list, and at the head of Chapter VII; but also for innumerable items of counsel, suggestion, information, and advice,

which have been of very great value to me, and which it gives me great pleasure thus, though inadequately, to acknowledge.

I have to thank also Mr. J. T. Looney, Mr. Clifford Bax, and others, for advice and counsel given, at various times. None of the above remarks should, however, be taken as committing these gentlemen to acceptance of all the views expressed in this book.

Mr. Allen has pleasure in acknowledging his indebtedness to the authors of the following books:—

*Shakespeare Identified*, by J. Thomas Looney. Cecil Palmer, 1920.

*The Poems of Edward de Vere*, by J. Thomas Looney. Cecil Palmer, 1921.

*Hamlet and the Scottish Succession*, by Lilian Winstanley. Camb. Univ. Press, 1921.

*Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History*, by Lilian Winstanley. Camb. Univ. Press, 1922.

*The Mystery of "Mr. W. H.,"* by Col. B. R. Ward, C.M.G. Cecil Palmer, 1923.

*The Original Order of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, by Sir Denys Bray. Methuen & Co., 1925.

*Axiophilus: or Oxford alias Shakespeare*, by Eva Turner Clark. Knickerbocker Press, New York, 1926.

*A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres*, edited by Capt. B. M. Ward. John Murray, 1926.

*The Seventeenth Earl of Oxford*, by Capt. B. M. Ward. John Murray, 1928.

*Shake-speare's Sonnets Unmasked*, by Bertram G. Theobald, B.A. Cecil Palmer, 1929.

## SOME QUOTATIONS PERTINENT TO THIS BOOK

BONAPARTE (First Consul) on M. de Lucchesini, the Prussian *Ministre Plénipotentiaire* at Paris.

(*To certain of my critics.*)

Ce n'est pas qu'il m attrappe, mais *il le veut trop*. . . . Si les gens qui font de la diplomatie avec moi savaient combien les routes tortueuses servent à les perdre plus qu'à m'égarer, ils marcheraient plus droit. (Mémoires de la Duchesse d'Abrantes.)

DEAN INGE, as quoted in the "Daily Telegraph," of September 24, 1929.

Mere inertia prevents most of us from questioning facts which we had accepted on authority. . . . Customary beliefs become part of our mental furniture: it is not pleasant to be told that our collection of Old Masters is mainly spurious.

HENRY JAMES on the Novelist's art.

What the novelist must possess is "the power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life in general so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it." Through intuition he must catch "the faintest hints."

From a Review of "The Life and Works of Louis François Roubiliac," by KATHARINE A. ESDAILE ("Times Literary Supplement," February 21, 1929).

The authoress has raised the whole subject . . . to a temperature at which one thing leads inevitably to another, and the new fact slips into the place prepared by speculation, as surely as the new element into the "series" of the chemist,

or the expected star into the calculations of the astronomer. Except that Mrs. Esdaile is meticulously careful of evidence, she works in a condition that is very much more like that of the creative writer, with her subject thoroughly "alive," and responding to suggestions from everywhere, than that of "histories."

MR. STRACHEY'S "Elizabeth and Essex," page 8.

The age . . . needs no description: everybody knows its outward appearances . . . but what is perhaps unattainable, would be some means by which the modern mind might reach to an imaginative comprehension of these beings of three centuries ago . . . might touch the very pulse of the machine. But the path seems closed to us. By what art are we to worm our way into these strange spirits. . . . The more clearly we perceive it, the more remote that singular universe becomes . . . the creatures in it meet us without intimacy; they are exterior visions, which we know but do not truly understand.

It is above all the contradictions of the age that baffle our imaginations and perplex our intelligence. . . . How is it possible to give a coherent account of their subtlety and their naiveté, their delicacy and their brutality, their piety and their lust? By what perverse magic were intellectual ingenuity and theological ingenuousness intertwined in John Donne? Who has ever explained Francis Bacon? How is it conceivable that the Puritans were the brothers of the dramatists?

It is so hard to gauge, from the exuberance of their decoration, the subtle, secret lives of their inner nature.

# CONTENTS


| CHAPTER | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | Introductory . . . . . | 1 |
| II. | Oxford's Poems and Shakespeare . | 13 |
| III. | Shakespeare in the Lyrics of Lyly's Plays . . . . . | 47 |
| IV. | Oxford in "Venus," and "Lucrece" | 67 |
| V. | Oxford in Chapman's Poems . . | 97 |
| VI. | Oxford in the Shakesperean Sonnets | 138 |
| VII. | The "Publication Committee" of Elizabethan Drama . . . | 200 |
| VIII. | Oxford in the Shakesperean Comedies | 218 |
| IX. | Oxford in the Shakesperean Comedies —*Continued* . . . . . | 257 |
| X. | Oxford in the Shakesperean Tragedies | 298 |
| XI. | Oxford in the Shakesperean Tragedies —*Continued* . . . . . | 335 |
| XII. | Oxford in the First Folio, and Summary . . . . . | 369 |
| | Appendix . . . . . | 383 |

# The Case for Edward de Vere 17th Earl of Oxford as "Shakespeare"

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

THE earliest book, of which I possess any knowledge, connecting Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, with the authorship of the Shakesperean drama, is "The Philosophy of Shakespeare's Plays Unfolded," written by Miss Delia Bacon, and published in 1857. That volume, I am bound to admit, I found singularly unreadable, and principally useful as a model of how such works should not be written; but it did set forth, briefly, the theory that the persons responsible, at bottom, for the Shakesperean drama were a secret committee, with Sir Walter Raleigh at its head, and Francis Bacon as its philosopher, including, among other members, the Earl of Oxford, Lord Paget, and Lord Buckhurst.

During the closing decades of last century, the Baconians, I believe, were, by far, the most assertive, among unorthodox students of Shakespeare; and they so remained until after 1920, in which year Mr. Cecil Palmer published Mr. J. T. Looney's work, "Shakespeare Identified," wherein the author endeavoured to show that the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford was the actual author of most of the plays usually attributed to the actor of Stratford-upon-Avon. Mr. Looney's book—as was inevitable, in the case of so daring a pioneer work—aroused more opposition than consent; yet it contained an admirably honest, courageous, and highly

intelligent, presentation of its subject, including much matter that could not possibly be ignored, and posing, again and again, with remorseless logic, a number of pertinent questions, which had been clamouring, long and insistently, for an answer, in many a doubtful and enquiring mind.

For my own part, his book, while awaking multitudinous questionings, and suggestions, did not altogether satisfy me; nor did I lay it down with the full conviction that the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford was, indeed, Shakespeare. But, if I could not, at a first reading, go quite the whole way with Mr. Looney, I could, and did, keep him company very far; for, thenceforward, I was fully convinced that Oxford was the historic original of Hamlet; and the author of "Shakespeare Identified," as I well knew, had long held, that "once it is generally conceded that the Earl of Oxford is Hamlet, the recognition of him as Shakespeare is only a matter of time." Therein, concerning myself, he has proved himself to be a prophet; since every year that followed has drawn me irresistibly, inevitably, towards the acceptance of that larger issue which it is the object of these pages to make clear.

At this point, perhaps, it will be well for me to set forth, briefly, the sequences of my Shakesperean faiths. Deeply interested in our dramatist, almost from boyhood, my orthodoxy was a little shaken, while I was still in my teens, by the strange ambiguity of Ben Jonson's Folio verses, to the Reader. "Those lines," I said to myself, "contain a second, and hidden, meaning, not altogether friendly to Shakespeare." From that time forward, I studied, with some care, the Baconian case; and concluded that, wildly extravagant though much of it seemed, some of the Baconian theories, soberly put, could not be altogether laughed away, any more than could the negative position so ably advocated by the late Sir George Greenwood. The commentators, quite evidently, had not touched the bottom of the matter;

but, for want of a more reasoned faith, I was thrown back, temporarily, upon a somewhat languid orthodoxy, from which not even a reading of Sir Sidney Lee's "Life of William Shakespeare" could move me; in which forlorn state I remained until 1923, the tercentenary of the First Folio, when, watching a performance of "Titus Andronicus," at the Old Vic. and, subsequently, of Ben Jonson's "The Silent Woman," by the now defunct Phœnix Society, it began, gradually, to dawn upon me, that Elizabethan poetry in general, including its drama, was far more closely inter-related than had hitherto been supposed, and that the poems, and plays, of the period teemed with topical allusions, personal, literary, and other, that modern scholarship, through timidity, and lack of penetrative imagination, had, almost wholly, overlooked; and which carefully examined, and properly correlated with the history of its time, would, I felt certain, throw floods of light upon Elizabethan drama generally, and, in particular, upon the Shakesperean plays.

More especially, as it seemed to me, had recognized authority failed to appreciate the ineradicable Elizabethan tendency to weave double meanings into the fabric of their works, and had not discovered the unfailing delight that Shakespeare, and his contemporaries, took in telling, beneath the surface, the tale that they dared not write openly into their texts. These conclusions led me to a series of studies, extending from that time until to-day; the results of which are, in part, set forth in my last two books, "Shakespeare, Jonson, and Wilkins as Borrowers," and "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists"; forerunners both of the present volume.[1]

These years of preliminary investigation have been a time of enthralling interest; convincing me, as they did, for the first time, of the now ascertained fact, that the Shakesperean plays were built up, to a far greater extent than had hitherto been supposed, upon contemporary

[1] Published by Cecil Palmer, 1928, 1929.

events, and contemporary characters; and that Jonson and Chapman, in their own poems and plays, had critized, commented upon, and even imitated, Shakespeare, in a manner that came to me as a complete surprise and revelation; and that furnishes, it would seem, a good answer to the question put by Miss Winstanley, in "Macbeth, King Lear and Contemporary History" (p. 13),—"Did Shakespeare's contemporaries leave no explanation of his plays; and, if so, where are they, and why have they been so long ignored?" They have been ignored, I answer, simply because those comments, being insinuated secretly beneath the surface of the texts, have not, in general, been recognized, hitherto.

Thus, then, it chanced that, little by little, there came slipping into my consciousness, with ever increasing conviction, the certainty that, in Chapman especially, one particular individual was being frequently, though darkly alluded to, either in connection with Shakespeare's early poems, or with the sonnets, or with the plays, and, particularly, the play of "Hamlet":—that the characteristics of this individual, in common with those of Hamlet himself, were, in almost every case, conformable with what we know of the character, and circumstances of Oxford, as elucidated in Capt. B. M. Ward's Life of the Earl. A further simultaneous perusal of other books and essays, including articles by Capt. Ward in the "Revue Anglo-Américaine," and "The Review of English Studies"; "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," by Capt. Hubert Holland; "The Mystery of Mr. W. H.," by Col. B. R. Ward, and, lastly, "The Original Order of Shakespeare's Sonnets," by Sir Denys Bray, and Mr. Looney's "The Poems of Edward de Vere," proved to me, conclusively, that, wherever, almost, one looked, among Elizabethan literature, within Shakespeare's admitted works, or outside them, the personality, and characteristics, of Oxford, seldom by direct statement, but usually by secret and subtle allusion,

and implication—even to punning upon his names and titles—were thrusting themselves peremptorily into notice. Wherever I sought, almost, though in unexpected places, and among unsuspected pens, that vision of the Earl reappeared; and conforming exactly with these conclusions, a very careful examination, from this new view-point, of many of the Shakesperean plays, revealed, in comedy and tragedy alike, an astonishingly complete series of cipher-lines, anagrams, puns, and word-play, all of them substantiating the fact that their author, while resolutely determined to remain, for a time, incognito in his works, had inserted clue after clue to his identity, and to the expression of his fixed wish, and purpose, through his writings to serve his country, and the world. Into two comedies, "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and "As You Like It," he further inserted, as I shall shew, satirical scenes, in which, good-humouredly, by way of defence, he repudiates the claim of the Stratford actor to the authorship of the plays.[1]

Obviously, therefore, unless I had stumbled upon a mare's-nest, the time had come to systematize, if I could, my ideas upon the subject; and to set them down, in the form of a book. That the theme had been largely ignored, or merely derided, by most Shakesperean scholars, of the more academic type, did not trouble me in the least; since I had long recognized that it is mainly to the amateur researchers,—who, having no official position to maintain, have also no traditional views to support,—that, until a general change of front comes about, we must look for genuine progress in the more daring, and imaginative, solutions of the vitally important, yet extremely difficult, Shakesperean problems that still confront us. Unofficial students, in fact, are best suited to this pioneer work, since it is undeniable that, in these matters, academic scholarship is, and always must be, in an unsatisfactory, and invidious, position. Recog-

[1] Post pp. 254-263.

nized, and official, authority is bound to support established tradition, as far as is compatible with established truth; and it is further bound, by virtue of its trust, and charge, stubbornly to set its face against every new, and too facile, theory or supposition, for which there appears to be no sufficiently evidential support. That is no more than its duty to the nation, as a whole, and—so far as individual scholars are concerned—to the Universities, or other learned Institutions, whose honoured, and accredited, representatives they are, and to whom the mass of the people rightly look for guidance in these abstruse, and highly specialized, matters.

That trust, to within recent years, the recognized Shakespereans have, on the whole, faithfully administered; the maintenance of an orthodox view-point having been made very much easier for them, than would otherwise have been the case, by the imprudence of certain anti-Stratfordian writers, especially among the Baconians—a notorious example being that of the late Sir Edward Durning Lawrence, who by his lack of trained skill, in marshalling, and expounding, his argument, brought needless discredit upon all Shakesperean unorthodoxy; thus, though unconciously, playing into the hands of his opponents, and prejudicing the claims of successors in Shakesperean controversy to a just and impartial hearing.

Time, however, is changing all that. The arguments for Bacon's connection with the plays are to-day advanced with more cogency than of old; and certain recent discoveries, alluded to in this book, by making Bacon's editorial connection, both with sonnets and plays, a matter of strong probability, have cleared the way to a much more rational approach to this delicate, and difficult, subject.

Precisely at this point, however, the perplexities of orthodox scholarship begin; for it is, I submit, impossible to read carefully, for example, those chapters

of Professor Georges Connes' book, "The Shakespeare Mystery," in which the rival claims to the authorship of the Shakesperean plays are impartially set forth, without realizing that, behind every one of them,—excepting, perhaps, the case for Rutland,—there seems to lie some basis of truth. But how much truth? An admission, once made, may easily entail further admissions; and where is one to stop? It is, upon a moderate statement, embarrassing for a Shakesperean scholar, of established reputation, to admit that, during a quarter of a century, perhaps, his considered expositions of the very subject in which he is held to be an expert, have been based upon premises demonstrably false. By dangerous admissions, therefore, the professional authority of a lifetime may be grievously impaired, and a long-held faith, amounting almost to a religion, basically shaken. Is it surprising, then, that, until the last possible moment, Authority declines to budge from his traditional standpoint, and, too often with cool indifference, or with scornful contempt, turns away from arguments which, impartially considered, are likely to compromise his peace-of-mind, and to detract from, if not to destroy, the merit, or validity, of much of his life's work? Can it be wondered at that, even to obvious and logically inescapable inferences, he becomes, at times, wilfully a little blind and deaf; and prefers habitually unintelligent denial to dangerously compromising admission.[1]

Such an attitude is natural; and, when not exaggerated into mere obstinacy, commendably prudent: but we live in an iconoclastic age—critical, cynical, curious, ardent, and often contemptuous towards the past; and many a thoughtful student of Shakespeare to-day, undeterred by the traditionalists, quietly linking fact to

[1] While revising these lines, I read, in *The Daily Telegraph* October 16, 1929, this public utterance by Mr. Bernard Shaw:—"He (the University man) comes out almost incapable of original thought." The statement, in its author's accustomed manner, is exaggerated; but there is some truth behind it, as there is behind most of Mr. Shaw's fulminations.

fact, and inference with inference; guessing the unseen from the seen, and judging the whole piece by the pattern, is beginning to find, as did Sir Denys Bray with the Sonnets, that Elizabethan literature is gradually surrendering its secrets, and allowing the truth, item by item, to slip naturally into the place that was waiting for it. The danger threatening modern academic orthodoxy is just this—that it may wake, one day, to find that Truth has passed it by during the night; and that, in those hours, authority has been discerned as something more fallible than had hitherto been supposed. Having shirked the battle, however, that authority can not grumble because it has been denied the victory.

The secret of this general academic failure has been due, in my judgment, to acceptance of some three basic fallacies—first, that Elizabethan drama in general, and especially that of Shakespeare, is not very closely related to the history of the times in which it was written; secondly, that the Elizabethan dramatists were not greatly addicted to the use of cipher sentences, and double meanings, for the revelation of their secret minds; and, thirdly, the widely prevalent idea that classical scholarship, rather than imaginative penetration, holds the key to Shakespeare's deeper meaning; and that classical quotations, detected in a speech, preclude the presence of simultaneous, contemporaneous, topical, and literary, allusion. The subtleties of the Elizabethan mind, including its addiction to symbolism, as well as to secrecy, have largely escaped a scholarship which is often mentally too rigid to enter successfully upon such lines of investigation; and finds its academic dignity compromised—as it believes—by familiar contact with anagrams, puns, ciphers, and other philological trickery of three hundred years ago. Imagination, however, and due allowance for psychological change, are as essential to the interpretation as they are to the writing of an Elizabethan play.

Let me give an instance. One leading English review,[1] having decided, after discussion, that, though futile, I was sane, rebuked me severely for having "reduced to absurdity all the well known tenets." Laying no claim to my critic's sapience, I am in no position to determine precisely what these "well known tenets" may be, for which he naively claims so high a regard; but I suggest, that if they are those that have brought modern Shakesperean commentary, of the conventional sort, into its present equivocal position, I deserve, instead of scolding, congratulation, for having shewn that these tenets are capable of being rationally reduced to absurdity, for having helped to supplant those tenets by others, which, though, at present, less "well known," are likely to lead us, in the near future, somewhat nearer to Shakesperean truth. Here is a case in point. Professor G. B. Harrison, commenting in "The Review of English Studies," upon the anglicized version of "The Shakespeare Mystery," by Professor Georges Connes, closes his remarks with the following words :—

> Perhaps, however, the Professor does establish one conclusion—that the late Sir Sidney Lee's "Life of William Shakespeare" is the anti-Stratfordian's best asset.

Now such a statement, coming from one of the leading Shakesperean scholars of the day, to whom we are indebted for easy and pleasant access to much Elizabethan lore, bears a significance deeper, I think, than its author can have realized, when he wrote the words. Sir Sidney Lee's "Life of William Shakespeare," first published some thirty years ago, went through six editions in ten years, and, I believe, has had a continuous sale, ever since. It was received with enthusiasm by the press; "Blackwood's Magazine" writing, as follows, concerning the fourth edition :—

> This masterly work is an honour to English scholarship, an almost perfect model of its kind, and it is matter for great national rejoicing that the standard life of Shakespeare

[1] "Life and Letters," May, 1929.

> has at last been made in England. Rarely have we seen a book so satisfying, so admirably planned, so skilfully executed. . . . It is an absolutely indispensable handbook for every intelligent reader of the plays.

Here, then, is another "mystery," calling for careful, and serious consideration!

Three theories of Shakesperean authorship may be said, for purposes of argument, in some sort, to hold the field to-day. These are the orthodox, the Oxfordian, and the Baconian.

Now Dr. Harrison, one may fairly suppose, accepts, substantially, the often expressed dictum of the late Sir Sidney Lee, that all Baconians are mad. My own Shakesperean and Oxfordian theories generally, he has described succinctly rather than politely, as "fantastic nonsense"; [1] and he has now decided that the standard "Life" of his own nominee, for the authorship of the sonnets and plays, is "the greatest asset" of the ever-growing number of convinced rejectors of any such assumption. The professor's statement, I need hardly say, is incorrect. Great asset as Sir Sidney Lee's book undoubtedly is, to our case—and I know at least one trained lawyer who was finally convinced by it, that, whoever Shakespeare might be, he was not the actor from Stratford—the strongest arguments, on the anti-Stratfordian side, are, unquestionably, those drawn from the Elizabethan texts, and Elizabethan references, as advanced in Mr. Looney's book, and in this one of my own, with Capt. Ward's "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," and Col. Ward's "Mystery of Mr. W. H." supplying a background of documented historic fact. Professor Harrison's statement, however, is hardly the less significant, for being less than wholly true; amounting, as it must, to an admission that, for want of ascertained fact, no satisfying Life of "Shakespeare" can be written. But what bankruptcy of scholarship have we here! For some three hundred years past, the light of intensive

[1] *The London Mercury*, October, 1929.

criticism has been turned, by enquiring minds, upon the most brilliant, and certainly one of the most individual, and assertive, intellects that even the intensely living Elizabethan world has yet produced; but nothing, say the scholars, has been revealed concerning the great man's life, and personality, that cannot be written upon a postcard!

My opponents again cannot have it both ways. If the genuine understanding, and interpretation, of Shakespeare, as man and as dramatist, as they authoritatively, and even scornfully assert, or imply, lies with themselves, and not with us, it is, quite obviously, incumbent upon these privileged inheritors of accepted tradition, to give us, I will not say a life of Shakespeare—since such a book they acknowledge to be beyond them—but some authentic, detailed, and, above all, scrupulously honest, piece of writing, that while finally disposing, not by mere sweeping assertion, or cynical mockery, but by closely reasoned argument, of all that has been written, hitherto, in favour of the connection of Oxford and Bacon with the plays, will, at the same time, provide a statement of the orthodox position, which will no longer provide its opponents with their readiest ammunition for attack. Failure to do this must, necessarily, in the minds of thoughtful men, prejudice the authority of the modern academic school, and render more than ever suspect the obstinate silence, or the disingenuous scorn, with which certain of them greet any, and every, attempt honestly to clarify this difficult Shakesperean problem. I would not minimize, ungenerously, the world's debt to our eminent Shakesperean scholars of to-day; and I agree that, perhaps, they do well to debate, at much length, such questions as whether Shakespeare, in "Hamlet," wrote "sullied," "sallied," "sillied," or "solid"; provided always that these secondary matters—for they are no more—do not take precedence over vastly more important ones, such, for instance, as the admitted fact that Hamlet is, appar-

ently, some twenty years of age at the beginning of the play, and, approximately, a man of thirty at its end. This should they have done, and not have left the other undone. Of that last mentioned anomaly, as also of a hundred others, contained in the plays, and outside them, this little book offers some explanation; and my hope, rather than my expectation, is that accepted authority, in Shakesperean matters, will pay some rational attention thereto. Prudence and caution, in the examination, and acceptance, of every new and untried theory, is commendable, in the leaders of opinion; but such caution can easily degenerate into sheer cowardice; and it is not, in my judgment, consonant with the high degree of their calling, that all those in authority should follow the example which, of late, has been set, beyond question, by some who, unable, or unwilling, themselves to enter in, stand derisively mocking before the open gates of an immensely important truth.

Even while I write these lines, there reaches me a list of the forthcoming publications of Mr. John Murray, among which I observe, with interest, the following significant announcement, for 1930: By Dr. Gerald H. Rendall, B.D., "Shakespeare's Sonnets and Edward de Vere." At what conclusions Dr. Rendall has arrived, I can, at the moment, only guess; but if, as I suppose, he holds de Vere to be the author of the Sonnets, it is likely that, as I hinted at the beginning of this chapter, the larger admission argued within these pages must follow hard upon. When once accepted authority has made up its mind, the landslide will follow very fast. What is here set down, may a little hasten the day when we, as a nation, shall understand at last, our greatest national heritage and possession in the realm of letters, and, even, as some hold, the strongest and most binding link between the English-speaking nations of the world.

## CHAPTER II

### THE CONNECTION OF OXFORD'S POEMS WITH SHAKESPEARE

In his edition of "The Poems of Edward de Vere" (1921), Mr. J. Thomas Looney has already considered, in some detail, the parallels which, undoubtedly, exist between the acknowledged writings of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and the poems and plays of William Shakespeare; and it is not my intention to attempt to rewrite either that useful work, or "Shakespeare Identified," to both of which, with due acknowledgment here, I refer all my readers: but I do wish, by way of introduction to a study of further aspects of this fascinating, and important, subject, to reconsider, a little, the connections which appear to exist, between Oxford and Shakespeare, in their capacities as lyrical poets; for which purpose I propose to examine some of Oxford's acknowledged poems, taking them in the order in which they appear in Mr. Looney's edition.

The great outburst of lyrical poetry, that glorified the last decades of Elizabeth's reign, was heralded by three song-books, in particular, which, together, will always hold honoured places among the pioneer works of our literature. These are the Miscellany, which Tottell published in 1557, containing the poems of the Earl of Surrey, Sir Thomas Wyatt, Lord Vaux, and others; "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres" (1573), the first of many anthologies published in Queen Elizabeth's reign, and "The Paradise of Dainty Devices," which appeared in 1576. It is a remarkable fact that each of these three volumes has connection, more or less direct, with Oxford,

or with "Shakespeare" or with both. First it is to be observed, that a principal contributor to the Miscellany was Oxford's uncle, the Earl of Surrey, who, in the matter of verse-form, made a permanent impression upon English poetry, by the establishment of the Shakesperean sonnet, and the introduction of blank verse to our language.[1] Surrey, when a boy of twelve, in 1529, had spent two years and nine months at Windsor, as companion to Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry, Duke of Richmond, enjoying care-free days that are wistfully recalled in Surrey's lines, written shortly before his execution:

> So crewell prison! How could betyde, alas!
> As proud Wyndsour, where I, in lust and joye,
> With a Kinges son my childishe years did passe—

and it is very probable—as I shall shew in more detail, when we come to consider Oxford's relation to the plays—that Slender's line, in "The Merry Wives of Windsor" (I/1)—

> I had rather than forty shillings I had my Book of Songs and Sonnets here—

is a reference, by Shakespeare, to that very book, to which Surrey contributed—a conjecture made more probable by the almost certain fact, that Slender, as we shall see later on, is Sir Philip Sidney, just as Fenton is his rival Oxford. I further add that, as I hinted in my last book [2]—and shall prove, conclusively I hope, in this one—Sir Philip Sidney is also, in part, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, in "Twelfth Night," Sir Toby Belch being, as I believe, none other than Philip Sidney's friend, Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and Earl of Dorset,[3] who also plays his part, as an Elizabethan literary

[1] "Poems of Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey," by F. Morgan Padelford, p. 40.

[2] "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 38, 39.

[3] For proof of identity of Thomas Sackville with Toby Belch see post pp. 274–279.

pioneer, by having written, in conjunction with Thomas Norton, "Gorboduc," composed for, and exhibited during, one of the many celebrated Christmas festivities held at the Inner Temple, in the early part of Queen Elizabeth's reign, and acted again, by the gentlemen of the Inner Temple, "before the Queen's most excellent Majestie in her highnes court at Whitehall, the 18th January 1561." "Gorboduc," it will be remembered, is not only the first historical subject regularly given to our country's stage; it is also the earliest extant piece that can be rightly described as a tragedy; and it is also the first play in the English language written in blank verse. As a further connecting link between the "Book of Songs and Sonnets," and Oxford-cum-Shakespeare, it is remarkable that the Grave-digger's song, in "Hamlet"—a ditty sung, be it remembered, with Hamlet (Oxford) listening [1]—"Has this fellow no feeling of his business that he sings at grave-making"—is from a song, "The Aged Lover Renounceth Love," by Lord Vaux, who was a contributor, not only to Surrey's "Book of Songs and Sonnets," in which it appeared, but also to the third of the three above-mentioned anthologies, "The Paradise of Dainty Devices," 1576.[2] The two following verses, in particular, of Lord Vaux's song:—

Lo I here the barèd skull,
By whose bald sign I know
That stooping age away shall pull
Which youthful years did sow.

For Beauty with her Band,
These crooked cares hath wrought;
And shipped me into the land,
From whence I first was brought—

[1] For proofs of identity of Oxford with Hamlet see my "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," Chap. IV.

[2] See J. T. Looney's Introduction to "Poems of Edward de Vere," p. xlix. Lord Vaux lived, for some years, near Oxford's home at Hackney.

seem, not merely to have furnished Shakespeare with subject matter for the shaping of the graveyard scene; but, in the closing couplet, are strangely analagous to Hamlet's own position, whose recent return from England had also "shipped him" again "into the land from whence he first was brought."[1]

In 1573 appeared the second of the three anthologies we have mentioned—"A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres"—a shrewdly annotated edition of which was published, by Capt. B. M. Ward, in 1926. Originally supposed to be the work of one man only—George Gascoigne—Capt. Ward has shewn, conclusively, that the volume is really an anthology, to which, in addition to Gascoigne, contributions were made by Sir Christopher Hatton, whose posy, or motto, with which he signed his work, was "Si fortunatus infoelix"—words that recall, at once, the "Fortunate Unhappy" signature, at the foot of the famous forged letter to Malvolio, and suggest an inference, supported by other evidence, that Hatton was a part original of Malvolio.[2] Another contributor whose identity, with that of Hatton, was concealed by Gascoigne, in a new edition—as Capt. Ward clearly shews—is the Earl of Oxford, who, during 1575, left England, to travel on the Continent, precisely three weeks before Gascoigne wrote to certain "Reverend Divines," practically claiming "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres" as his own work. Very ingenious, and convincing, is the manner in which Capt. Ward argues his case, and shews, on page xxix of his Introduction, how the name, Edward de Vere, is keyed into the last of the

[1] For the whole song see "The Surrey-Wyatt Anthology," Oxford Press. It is noteworthy, as a further connection of all these books with Oxford, that Surrey's Poems (F. M. Padelford, p. 193) contain, immediately following his lines on "Windsor Walls," an epigram to Oxford's particular friend, Thomas Radcliffe, Third Earl of Sussex. See B. R. Ward's "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," p. 161.

[2] See Ward's "Hundreth Sundrie Flowres," Introduction, p. 11, also my "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 43-45.

Oxford poems, commencing "L'Escu d'amour." I shall not include here Oxford's poems from "The Hundreth Sundrie Flowres"; but if the reader will refer to Capt. Ward's book, he will, I think, agree that their style is often very close indeed to that of the Shakesperean sonnets, the closing verses of the poem in which the young earl makes "bootelesse comparison betweene two letters" being particularly interesting. They run :—

> But now percase thou wilt one *G.* permit,
> And with that *G.* thou meanest *B.* to joyne :
> Alas, alas, me thinkes it were not fit,
> (To cloke thy faulte) such fine excuse to coyne.
> Take dooble *G.* for thy most loving letter,
> And cast of *B.* for it deserves no better.
>
> Thus have I played a little with thy *B.*
> Whereof the brand is thine, and mine the blame :
> The wight which woundes thy wandring will is he,
> And I the man that seeke to salve thy name.
> The which to thinke, doth make me sigh sometime,
> Though thus I strive to jest it out in ryme.
> *Meritum petere, grave.*

These two stanzas are strongly reminiscent of the manner of word-play used in sonnet 131/136, particularly :—

> Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
> And then thou lovest me, for my name is "Will"—

the vital difference being, that the quoted lines concerning "Will" are more mature, by some twenty years, than those of Oxford in the earlier book; these last revealing, in particular, a crudity of multiplied alliteration, which argues the, as yet, imperfectly trained ear; as in the line :—

> The wight which woundes thy wandering will is he—

a fault that, if my thesis be correct, is recognized, and deliberately mocked at, by Shakespeare, who, in the

absurdities of Pyramus and Thisbe, parodies this defect of his own early work. The reader will not fail to observe that Oxford plays here with "B,"[1] a name "whereof the brand is thine," much as, in the sonnet referred to, he plays with his name "Will," which name also, as he has already told us, in sonnet 118/111, has "received a brand"; and here again, moreover, in a verse admittedly by Oxford, we have "thy wandering will." All this, I submit, is profoundly significant, in relation to "Shakespeare's" identity, especially when we remember that, just as Oxford has here been keying his name into the verse, so also, as I shall prove, he, with no less deliberation, will key that name, by unmistakable historic personal, and family, references, into the verses that precede the "Will" sonnet.

To the third of the three cited anthologies, "The Paradise of Dainty Devices" (1576), Oxford was also a contributor; but I prefer to postpone comment upon those poems, until I come to them in Mr. Looney's collected edition of Oxford's verse, through some of which I shall take the reader, beginning with those that, belonging mainly to the first period of the courtier-poets of Queen Elizabeth's reign, are examples of Oxford's early work, when his half-formed style was still under the influence of his uncle, Surrey, and of Lord Vaux. All of these, in Mr. Looney's opinion—with which I concur—were probably written before the crisis in Oxford's life, which occurred in 1576, and is fully described in Capt. Ward's "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford."[2]

The first poem, in Mr. Looney's collection, is the well-known echo-song, "Sitting alone upon my thought," a strangely significant circumstance, because—to a much

[1] I think it probable that "G" here stands for Gascoigne and "B" for Oxford's title "Bulbec," in which case, "Take double G and cast of B" mean "Let Gascoigne take the double credit, as I wish my own identity to disappear."

[2] pp. 113-129.

greater extent, I think, than its editor was then aware—the poem leads us, at once, into a group of Shakesperean associations, some of which, however, Mr. Looney (p. 3) has pointed out. For instances, the "bondage," "delivery," "cave and echo" motives, from these two lines—

What wight first caught this heart and can from *bondage* it
*deliver*. *Vere*.
Yet who doth most adore this wight, oh *hollow caves* tell true?
*You*.—

are used again—and still by a young woman in love, though this time requited—namely Juliet (*R. & J.*, II, 2)—

Bondage is hoarse and may not speak aloud,
Else would I tear the *cave* where *Echo* lies;—

whilst the very similar ideas, of cruel, causeless, rejection of the goddess, by Cupid, occur in the line from "Venus and Adonis" (139/42)—[1]

There mightst thou pause, for then were I not for thee;
But having no defects, why dost abhor me?—

lines, moreover, which, with their peculiar emphasis upon the letters "E O," in "Echo," and "Romeo," combined with the repetition of "Vere" (pronounced Ver), and an assurance that,

Echo told the truth,
As true as Ph*oe*bus oracle—

Phoebus having again O E at its centre—all point to Oxford's insistence here upon his family name, with its motto, "*Ver*o nihil *Ver*ius." [2] Further be it noted that, only three and five stanzas, respectively, further down in "Venus and Adonis," comes the line,

[1] Mr. Looney, in his Introduction, pp. 74, 75, has pointed out three lines of the poem that are echoed in identical order, in R. & J.

[2] Should any reader doubt Oxford's readiness or ability thus to play "so nicely with his name," I refer him to the keyed acrostic set forth by Capt. B. R. Ward, on p. xxix of his Introduction to "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres."

Witness this primrose bank whereon I lie,

sweetly echoed by Hermia (*M.N.D.*, I, 1).

And in the wood where often you and I
Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie.

Note also that this thought—

Thou wast begot—to get it is thy duty—

reappears, again and again, in the early sonnets, to the Oxford connection with which, as also to their successors, I will refer later on.

Thus already, in our brief examination of a few lines only of Oxford's echo poem, we have awakened vivid remembrances of "The first heir of my invention," namely "Venus and Adonis," of The Sonnets, of an early comedy, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and of an early tragedy, "Romeo and Juliet"; from all which, returning to the poem again, we pass on to a later tragedy and find ourselves listening to repeated echoes from the Ophelia scenes of Hamlet, whose historic protagonist is Oxford himself. Some of these Hamlet parallels I have examined closely in my last book,[1] and, therefore, will not repeat them seriatim; but shall content myself with recording here a few only; pointing out that, in these recastings of lines from the echo song—for such I take them to be—Shakespeare carefully, and significantly, avoids those which, as we saw, he has already made use of for "Romeo and Juliet." The lady in the case is, it seems, Anne Vavasour, one of Queen Elizabeth's Maids of Honour, who had fallen in love with Oxford, and who, jointly with Anne Cecil, stands, I think, as a historic original of Ophelia.

| OXFORD. | SHAKESPEARE. |
| --- | --- |
| I saw a faire young lady come, her secret feares to wayle | OPH. He comes before me.<br>POL. Mad for thy love.<br>OPH. My Lord, I do not know, But truly I do fear it. (*Ham.*, II, 1.) |

[1] "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," Chap. IV.

Cladd all in coulor of a Nun & covered with a vaylle
I myghte discerne his face.

As one myghte see a damaskee rose hid under cristall glasse

Three times with her soft hand.

And syghed so sore as myghte have movde som pittye in the rockes
From syghes and shedding amber teares, into sweete songe she brake.
Who was ye first that bredd in me this feavere ? *Vere.*

What nymphe deserves his lykinge best, yet doth in sorrow rue ? *You.*

HAM. Get thee to a nunnery, go. (*Ham.*, III, 1.)

OPHE. He falls to such perusal of my face. (*Ham.*, II, 1.)

OPHE. The rose of the fair state . . . the glass of fashion. (*Ham.*, III, 1.)

OPHE. He took me by the wrist, & thrice his head thus waving up and down. (*Ham.*, II, 1.)

OPHE. He raised a sigh so piteous and profound

OPHE. I cannot choose but weep (*cf.* also Ophelia's songs in *Ham.*, IV, 5).

HAM. Would'st thou be a breeder of sinners ? (*Ham.*, III, 1.)

HAM. Nymph, in thy orisons. . . .

OPHE. I of ladies most deject and wretched. (*Ham.* III, 1.)

That this tenderly scornful lyric by Oxford, upon Anne Vavasour's love-affair with him, expresses, with surprising accuracy, in turn of phrase, idea, image, and incident, the psychology of the Ophelia scenes of "Hamlet," seems to me to be an unescapable conclusion; and if the Prince of Denmark's identity with Oxford be also accepted, then his furious outburst to Ophelia—

> I say that we will have no more marriages. Those that are married already, all but one, shall live; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go !—

reflects the bitter disillusionment of a young man already married, unhappily, to Anne Cecil; and, at the moment, indignant against matrimony in general.[1] It seems to follow that Shakespeare—whatever his identity—when he wrote the Ophelia scenes, had this poem of Oxford before him, either in manuscript, or in memory; and

[1] Towards the end of 1591 Oxford married his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham. For all this, concerning the Vavasours, see Ward's "Oxford," pp. 216, 227-229, 247.

was fully acquainted with the man by whom it was written and the circumstances with which it is concerned.

The second poem by de Vere, in Mr. Looney's collection (p. 4)—a sonnet, " Love Thy Choice "—is interesting, not only as being the only sonnet in the collection, but also because it is in the Shakesperean form, and, in its " woeful words of plaint," recalls the advice of Proteus, to Thurio, to " tangle her desires by wailful sonnets," as also Thurio's assurance, in reply, that he has " a sonnet that will serve the turn." As for the third poem, " What Cunning Can Express," its subject and phrasing, as Mr. Looney has remarked, recall, at once, the opening verses of Lucrece, while the stanza—

> Fair Cynthia's silver light,
> That beats on running streams,
> Compares not with her white,
> Whose hairs are all sun-beams ;
> So bright my nymph doth shine,
> As day unto my eyne.
>
> With this there is a red,
> Exceeds the Damask-Rose ;
> Which in her cheeks is spread,
> Whence every favour grows.
> In sky there is no star,
> But she surmounts it far—

suggests Shakespeare's sonnets 82/98, 89/99, but is closer still, in phrasing, to sonnet 148/130—

> If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
> I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,

the parallels including the comparison-motive of damasked red and white roses, and a woman's fair head of " sunbeams," against another's dark head of " black wires " ; while the opening of the next stanza—

> When Phoebus from the bed
> Of Thetis doth arise—

gives us the mistress, as well as the goddess-motive, visible in two further lines of the same sonnet (148/130—

I grant I never saw a goddess go,
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.

There follow, in Mr. Looney's collection, three poems on "Desire," of which the first has an opening couplet—

The lively lark stretched forth his wing,
The Messenger of Morning bright;—

recalling, once more, that ecstacy of innocent longing—

It was the lark, the herald of the morn—

while the last stanza of the third of the three "Desire" poems, with its farewell to "Fond Desire," reminds one of the opening scene of "Two Gentlemen," and—also upon a note of farewell—of Valentine's reproach to Proteus, as being a "votary to fond desire." Were there no other points of contact, a common concern with "desire" would alone bring Shakespeare and Oxford together, to this extent; since, in my concordance to Shakespeare, I find the word "desire" repeated 281 times; and no one, I imagine, is likely to challenge the dictum of Frank Harris, that "Desire," in especial, has inspired him with phrases magically expressive; though, when comparing Oxford's verses with those of Shakespeare, it must not be forgotten that the former are, by their style, quite evidently, the work of a very young man.

There follows a rather charming song, "Fortune and Love," touching once upon the note of desire, but suggesting vividly, in its two closing stanzas, two Shakesperean comedies, which these poems of Oxford have not, as yet, recalled, namely "As You Like It," and "Love's Labour's Lost."

This discord it begot
Atheists, that honour not.
Nature thought good,
Fortune should ever dwell
In court, where wits excel,
Love keep the wood.

So to the wood went I,
With love to live and lie,
Fortune's forlorn.
Experience of my youth,
Made me think humble Truth
In deserts born.

My saint I keep to me,
And Joan herself is she,
Joan fair and true.
She that doth only move
Passions of love with love.
Fortune adieu!

Who can read these lines, understandingly, and not straightway become a follower of Touchstone and Rosalind, from the court, "where wit excels," to the forest, wherein simple living, and happiness, are found beneath the greenwood tree.[1] As for the choice of St. Joan, and of "humble Truth," does not Biron, in his "dark lady" speech, repeat an exactly parallel thought, connected, moreover, as also is the poem before us, with the plague of Cupid;—

Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.[2]

Nor should the reader forget that the speaker of those words, Biron, in that play, certainly stands, as I shall shew later, for Shakespeare himself.

From "Fortune and Love," I pass on to one of the most fascinating of all Oxford's admitted writings, that have come down to us—the Bedingfield letter.

Thomas Bedingfield was a close friend of Oxford, united to him by a common love of letters, and also by other similarities of interest. At a tournament held in May, 1571, when Oxford was 21 years old, Thomas Bedingfield was one of the "defendants," who opposed him, and when, three years later, on July 18, 1574, the disquieting news reached the English court, that "My

[1] See post. on "As You Like It," pp. 264-266.
[2] See "Love's Labour's Lost," III, 1.

Lord of Oxford and Lord Seymour are fled out of England, and passed by Bruges to Brussels," Bedingfield was the man instantly despatched, by the angry queen, to bring Oxford home.[1] Shortly before the tournament already mentioned, Bedingfield had written a translation of "Cardanus Comfort," which Oxford, against the wish of its author, published in 1573, with a prefatory poem by himself, in no way very remarkable, and accompanied by a letter, which appeared in the book, and reappears here, because I consider it to be one of the most beautiful in the English language, thoroughly characteristic of its author, at his best, and, further, Shakesperean in quality, through and through.

To My Loving Friend Thomas Bedingfield Esquire, One of Her Majesty's Gentlemen Pensioners.

After I had perused your letters, good master Bedingfield, finding in them your request far differing from the desert of your labour, I could not choose but greatly doubt, whether it were better for me to yield to your desire, or execute mine own intention towards the publishing of your book. For I do confess the affections I have always borne towards you could move me not a little. But when I had thoroughly considered in my mind, of sundry and diverse arguments, whether it were best to obey mine affections, or the merits of your studies: at the length I determined it were better to deny your unlawful request, than to grant or to condescend to the concealment of so worthy a work. Whereby as you have been profitted in the translating, so many may reap knowledge by the reading of the same, that shall comfort the afflicted, confirm the doubtful, encourage the coward, and lift up the base-minded man to achieve to any true sum or grade of virtue, whereto ought only the noble thoughts of men to be inclined.

And because next to the sacred letters of divinity, nothing doth persuade the same more than philosophy, of

[1] Letter from Henry Killigrew, Ambassador at Edinburgh. Quoted Ward's "Oxford," p. 93, *cf.* also, "Two Gentlemen," III, 1. *Launce.* "Sir, there is a proclamation that you are vanish'd," etc. See post p. 232.

which your book is plentifully stored: I thought myself to commit an unpardonable error to have murdered the same in the waste bottoms of my chests; and better I thought it were to displease one than to displease many; further considering so little a trifle cannot procure so great a breach of our amity, as may not with a little persuasion of reason be repaired again. And herein I am forced, like a good and politic captain, oftentimes to spoil and burn the corn of his own country, lest his enemies thereof do take advantage. For rather than so many of your countrymen should be deluded through my sinister means of your industry in studies (whereof you are bound in conscience to yield them an account) I am content to make spoil and havoc of your request, and that, that might have wrought greatly in me in this former respect, utterly to be of no effect or operation. And when you examine yourself, what doth avail a mass of gold to be continually imprisoned in your bags, and never to be employed to your use? I do not doubt even you so think of your studies and delightful Muses. What do they avail if you do not participate them to others? Wherefore we have this Latin proverb. *Scire tibi nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.* What doth avail the tree unless it yield fruit unto another? What doth avail the vine unless another delighteth in the grape? . . .

And so it is in all other things as well as in man. Why should this man be more esteemed than that man but for his virtue, through which every man desireth to be accounted of? Then you amongst men, I do not doubt but will aspire to follow that virtuous path, to illuster yourself with the ornaments of virtue. And in mine opinion as it beautifyeth a fair woman to be decked with pearls and precious stones, so much more it ornifyeth a gentleman to be furnished in mind with glittering virtues.

Wherefore, considering the small harm I do you, the great good I do to others, I prefer mine own intention to discover your volume, before your request to secret the same; wherein I may seem to you to play the part of the cunning and expert mediciner or physician, who although in the extremity of his burning fever is desirous of cold liquor or drink to qualify his sore thirst, or rather kill his

languishing body: yet for the danger he doth evidently know by his science to ensue, denyeth him the same. So *you being sick of so much doubt in your own proceedings, through which infirmity you are desirous to bury and inseuill (sic) your works in the grave of oblivion: yet I knowing the discommodities that shall redound to yourself there*[1] (and which is more unto your countrymen) as one that is willing to salve so great an inconvenience, and nothing dainty to deny your request.

Again we see, if our friends be dead *we cannot show or declare our affection more than by erecting them of tombs, whereby when they be dead in deed, yet make we them live as it were again through their monument;*[1] but with me behold it happeneth far better; for in your lifetime I shall erect you such a monument, that as I say, in your lifetime you shall see how noble a shadow of your virtuous life, shall hereafter remain when you are dead and gone. And in your lifetime, again I say, I shall give you that monument and remembrance of your life, whereby I may declare my goodwill, though with your illwill, as yet that I do bear you in your life.

Thus earnestly desiring you in this one request of mine (as I would yield to you in a great many) not to repugn the setting forth of your own proper studies, I bid you farewell.

From my new country Muses of Wivenhole, wishing you as you have begun, to proceed in these virtuous actions. For when all things shall else forsake us, virtue will ever abide with us, and when our bodies fall into the bowels of the earth, yet that shall mount with our minds into the highest heavens.

From your loving and assurred friend,

E. OXENFORD.

Few careful readers, I suppose, and none at all with any subtle appreciation of the niceties of style and character, will withold admiration from that letter, which I regard as a quite perfect example of the manner in which an Elizabethan courtier, of exalted rank, could address a contemporary gentleman, to whom he was bound by regard and admiration, as well as by congenial community of taste. The mind revealed in this epistle,

[1] Italics mine.

with its patronage, that never condescends ; its abiding, yet never distant, dignity ; its intimacy, that is never familiar ; its grace, its gentleness, its logic, its sympathy, its deep love of letters, as well as of wisdom and of virtue ; its indefinable qualities of disarming, and of compelling, charm, are precisely those which seem to me to be apparent in Hamlet's own personal intercourse with his friends, in the play. This letter to Bedingfield, as I read it, is just such a one as Shakespeare—had the circumstances of his play necessitated it—could have put into the mouth of Hamlet, without causing us to vary, or diminish in any way, our conception of the prince's character. Not long ago, following an after-dinner speech of mine to one of the London Shakespeare Societies, I was severely taken to task, by one of my hearers, for daring to assert that so insolent a person, as was Oxford, could ever have been the historic original of the Prince of Denmark : but, setting aside the obvious fact that insolence, upon occasion—e.g. to Polonius—is a marked potentiality of Hamlet's character, I would ask any of my readers, who may chance to think as my critic does, to ponder over this letter, before deciding, if they honestly can, that, between the character it reveals, and the subtler shades of Hamlet's nobleness, there is no reconciling affinity.

The parallel, however, goes far deeper than mere style, and revelation of mind ; for is it not undeniable—if, for the purpose of argument, the reader will grant me, for an instant, the identity of Oxford with Shakespeare—that you have him here exactly foretelling the very circumstances which it is the purpose of this book to make clear—namely, that, being desirous—as Bedingfield also was—through infirmity " to bury and inseuill certain works in the grave of oblivion," and " knowing the discommodities that shall redound thereby," he is " willing to salve so great an inconvenience " ; which he does in Bedingfield's case, by openly publishing the book under its true author's name ; in his own, by

adopting a pseudonym, while inserting—as the course of this book will show—multitudinous clues to the real authorship of the sonnets, and of the plays. Then, as earnest of what is to come, he inserts, in the letter, a passage, which, as Mr. Looney has pointed out, is closely paralleled in the well-known lines from "Much Ado" (V, 2):—

> If a man do not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps.

Further, this part of the Bedingfield letter recalls many lines in the sonnets, such as—

> Not marble nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes shall outlive this powerful rhyme.

I need hardly point out the vital importance, to my argument, of these iterated foreshadowings of the mature Shakespeare, in the immature Oxford.

From the Bedingfield letter, I pass on to the second group of poems collected by Mr. Looney, dating, in general, from, and after, the crisis in Oxford's life, which occurred in 1576; though it must not be supposed that the dates given—namely those of the earliest known edition—are, necessarily, those of the original texts, some of which may have been, and probably were, written a considerable time before they appeared in print.

The first of these, "Loss of Good Name," is Oxford's versified lament over that crisis in his life, fully described in Capt. Ward's book,[1] when, during the Earl's absence abroad, in 1576, scandals were circulated in London, apparently by de Vere's first cousin, Lord Henry Howard, and others,[2] concerning the legitimacy of the child born to him by his wife, Burleigh's daughter, Anne Cecil. Oxford, hearing of the rumours, hastened home, in wild fury, and, on his way across the Channel, was attacked by pirates—an incident duly recalled in

[1] pp. 113-129. [2] See "As You Like It," post pp. 264-265.

"Hamlet," IV, 6, where Horatio, in a letter from the prince—also on voyage to England—reads :—

> "Ere we were two days old at sea, a pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase."[1]

Explanations, of sorts, were duly forthcoming ; but there was, I gather, no real reconciliation. Husband and wife were, in some degree, permanently estranged ; and the world of London took sides, with Oxford, or against him. Burleigh, however, wrote that "unkindness in me towards him (Oxford) was grounded upon untrue reports of others" ;[2] and it is interesting to note that some of Hamlet's closing words echo both Burleigh's own phraseology, and the "Loss of Good Name" motive, which is the title of the song we are considering.

> Report me and my cause aright
> To the unsatisfied. . . .
> O good Horatio, what a wounded name,
> Things standing thus unknown, shall live behind me.

Here are the first and last of the three stanzas comprising the poem.

Fram'd in the front of forlorn hope past all recovery,
I stayless stand, to abide the shock of shame and infamy.
My life, through ling'ring long, is lodg'd in lair of loathsome ways ;
My death delay'd to keep from life the harm of hapless days.
My sprites, my heart, my wit and force, in deep distress are drown'd ;
The only loss of my good name is of these griefs the ground.

[1] *Cf.* also the incident in "Two Gentlemen of Verona," when Valentine (Oxford) is captured by outlaws, post pp. 224, 387.

[2] It is noteworthy that a draft letter of Burleigh's, written only a few weeks earlier, on June 12, 1576, refers to the jury finding "the death of the poor man whom he (Oxford) killed in my house, *se defendendo*"—all of which episode—as I shewed in "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 85-87—was, almost certainly, twisted by Shakespeare into the grave-digger dialogue, concerning Ophelia, in "Hamlet," V, 1. The closing portions of "Hamlet" seem to be almost an autobiographical pastiche of some of Oxford's personal experiences.

Help Gods, help saints, help sprites and powers that in the heaven do dwell,
Help ye that are aye wont to wail, ye howling hounds of hell;
Help man, help beasts, help birds and worms, that on the earth do toil;
Help fish, help fowl, that flock and feed upon the salt sea soil,
Help echo that in air doth flee, shrill voices to resound,
To wail this loss of my good name, as of these griefs the ground.

All this, the reader will observe, contains, in addition to the "Hamlet" material, already pointed out, suggestions for several of the sonnets, particularly—

When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes—

and recalls also the well-known line of Cassio's, in "Othello," III, 3, concerning

He who filches from me my good name.

"Othello," also, I feel certain—though, as we shall see, aimed historically at Philip of Spain—is, in part, another elaboration of Oxford's domestic troubles, concerning which, in their relation to that tragedy, I shall have more to say later on;[1] but, meanwhile, I would point out, as Mr. Looney has done, in notes to the poem (p. 23), that Shakespeare, before he began to write tragedy, had sufficiently detached himself from miseries inseparably connected with these episodes, to be able to weave some of them, patently, into one of his lightest, and merriest, plays, "The Comedy of Errors," from the first scene of the second act of which I quote. Luciana speaks:—

Luc. Why, headstrong liberty is lash'd with woe.
There's nothing situate under heaven's eye
But hath his bound, in earth, in sea, in sky;
The beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls,
Are their males' subjects and at their controls.
Men more divine, the masters of all these,
Lords of the wide world and wild watery seas,

[1] Post p. 323.

Indued with intellectual sense and souls,
Of more pre-eminence than fish and fowls,
Are masters to their females, and their lords—

In those lines we have, I think, an echo of the too "headstrong liberty" taken by Oxford, and accorded to his wife, when he left that wife at home, while he travelled abroad, and a repetition of the bird, beast, fish, and sea-motives, of the last stanza of Oxford's poem, the spirit of which seems to be reflected, with exactitude, in many lines, such as (II, 1)—

Luc. Ere I learn love, I'll practise to obey.
Adr. How if your husband start some other where?
Luc. Till he come home again, I would forbear.
Adr. Patience unmoved! no marvel though she pause;
They can be meek that have no other cause.
A wretched soul bruised with adversity—

wherein are dramatized the respective circumstances, and conditions, physical and mental, that existed between Oxford and his unhappy wife, at this time. The presentation of one of the characters, as a Syracusan merchant, is also pertinent; because, during this very journey of Oxford's, from which alleged domestic scandal recalled him, he had visited Palermo, in Sicily—to which, by its historic Norman interest,[1] the Earl's Norman ancestry would, naturally, have drawn him—and, possibly, to Syracuse as well.

The very title of the next poem, "Revenge of Wrong"—No. XI in Mr. Looney's book—seems to continue the same theme; the line—

Patience perforce is such a pinching pain—

being comparable with Adriana's "helpless patience," in the scene (II, 1) of "The Comedy of Errors," from

[1] The Norman Kings of Sicily ruled at Palermo from 1072 to 1255, and magnificent architectural memorials of their reigns, in Palermo itself, together with the cathedral of Monreale, close by, attest their power and genius. At Palermo, Oxford issued a challenge to combat "against all manner of persons whatsoever, and at all manner of weapons." Ward's "Oxford," pp. 111, 112.

which we have just been quoting; but the play that the whole poem foretells, throughout, is, of course, "Hamlet," to which every line may be matched, without any twisting or distortion; while the verses that follow "Love and Antagonism,"—also taken from "The Paradise of Dainty Devices" (1576)—continue the Hamlet motive, as witness the detached lines—

> In woeful song, in dole display.
>
> The stricken deer hath help to heal his wound—

the stricken "deer" theme, together with the "bewailing" motive, that precedes it, being repeated in the play-scene, with Hamlet's,

> Come let the stricken deer go weep,
> The hart ungalled play.

The closing lines of the poem—

> And shall I pray the Gods to keep the pain
> From her that is so cruel still?
> No, no, on her work all your will.
>
> And let her feel the power of all your might,
> And let her have her most desire with speed,
> And let her pine away both day and night,
> And let her moan, and none lament her need;
> And let all those that shall her see,
> Despise her state and pity me—

suggest, at once, Hamlet's bitter speeches to Ophelia; and, even more vividly, the closet-scene with his mother, in which, "cruel to be kind," he lets her, nevertheless, "feel the power of all his might." Stanza 141 of "Lucrece," quoted by Mr. Looney—

> Let him have time to tear his curlèd hair,
> Let him have time against himself to rave,
> Let him have time of Time's help to despair,
> Let him have time to live a loathèd slave,
> Let him have time a beggar's orts to crave,
> And time to see one that by alms doth live
> Disdain to him, disdained scraps to give—

is interesting, not merely by its correspondences of form

and idea, but also by the fact,—so characteristic of Shakespeare's method, in rehandling and transposing his material—or, as Oxford, his own personal experiences—that the two parallel anathemas are aimed, first at a woman, in " Love and Antagonism," and then at a man, in " Lucrece."

When first I took up these Oxford poems, their connection with the Shakesperean plays, though apparent, almost at a glance, was no more than mildly interesting ; and—as has been the case with most of the more important conclusions, come to in my last three books—a close and systematic examination was needed, to reveal to me the intensely significant fact, that, as my readers, I hope, are now beginning to perceive—in the wake of Mr. Looney, to whom the credit of first discovery goes—that they form a quarrying-ground for many of the best-known plays, with " Hamlet," as the most intimately personal of them all to Oxford, taking, very naturally, pride of place. It need come as no surprise, therefore, that the next poem on our list, " The Forsaken Man," opens with a motive familiar to every spectator of the " Hamlet " play, namely " the trappings and the suits of woe," in which the Prince of Denmark is traditionally garbed. Here are the two opening stanzas.

A crown of bays shall that man wear,
  That triumphs over me ;
For black and tawny will I wear,
  Which mourning colours be.
The more I follow'd one,
  The more she fled away,
As Daphne did full long agone,
  Apollo's wishful prey.
The more my plaints I do resound
  The less she pities me ;
The more I sought the less I found,
  That mine she meant to be.
Melpomene alas, with doleful tunes help than ; (then)
  And sing Bis, woe worth on me forsaken man.

Then Daphne's bays shall that man wear,
That triumphs over me;
For black and tawny will I wear,
Which mourning colours be.
Drown me with trickling tears,
You wailful wights of woe;
Come help these hands to rend my hairs,
My rueful hap to shew.
On whom the scorching flame
Of love doth feed you see;
Ah a làlalantida, my dear dame
Hath thus tormented me.
Wherefore you muses nine, with doleful tunes help than,
And sing Bis, woe worth on me forsaken man.

The "suits of woe" parallel is a striking one; but another hypothesis, more interesting still, because more original, is raised by the poem as a whole. Reading it for the first time, I was struck by the crudity of the verse, which suggested the work of a very young man, as immature in managing his love-affairs, as in poetizing over them; and, on a second reading, certain lines of the song came to me with a kind of grotesque familiarity, which recalled, both in sound and sense, the "tedious brief" scene, of young Pyramus and Thisbe, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." That couplet :—

The more I sought the less I found,
That mine she meant to be—

is very close to the experience of Pyramus, seeking the willing maiden, and finding only her blood-stained mantle; while Oxford's "doleful tune," of that same stanza, is not far from Pyramus's "dreadful dole," in "The Dream," and is accompanied also by a classical reference to Melpemone. Re-reading those lines, the idea came to me that the mature Oxford, amused by the incompetence of his own boyish poem, of long ago—and able now, from a safe distance, to laugh at the love-torments which had engendered it—had deliberately

burlesqued, into still greater fatuity, his own rather silly song, and had then inserted it into his own play-within-a-play, of "The Dream"—an idea emphasized by the coincidence that the last song which we considered, "Love and Antagonism," with its "stricken deer" motive, and its obvious connection with Hamlet, points to another Shakesperean play-within-a-play, this time, however, treated seriously.

A perusal of the second stanza, of "The Forsaken Man," confirmed my suspicion, since Oxford's "drown me with trickling tears," followed, two lines lower down, by "come help," can be matched with Pyramus's, "Come tears, confound"; while the young poet's other absurd alliterations, such as "You wailful wights of woe," are matched by those of Pyramus, "Quail, crush, conclude and quell." There is parallel, also, between the "sisters three," or Fates, of the one poem, and "Muses nine," of the other; nor is it, I think, over fanciful to detect a connection, in Shakespeare's mind, between the two versions, when he wrote:

> Hip. This is the silliest stuff that ever I heard.
> The. The best of this kind are but shadows: the worst are no worse, if imagination amend them.
> Hip. It must be your imagination then, and not theirs.

Here Theseus stands for Shakespeare himself, taking Hippolyta's advice, and allowing his own imagination—and not that of his rustic characters—to "amend the worst," into something that, far from being "no worse" than the original poem, is so good, of its kind, that it has been delighting audiences now for more than three hundred years.[1]

Of the next poem in the collection—"I am not what I seem to be"—I quote here the first two verses only, and a part of the third:—

[1] Oxford, in brief, said to himself: "These early verses of mine are so bad that, by making them a little worse, I can make their effect much better," which accordingly he proceeded to do.

I am not as I seem to be,
For when I smile I am not glad;
A thrall, although you count me free,
I, most in mirth, most pensive sad,
I smile to shade my bitter spite
As Hannibal that saw in sight
His country soil with Carthage town,
By Roman force defaced down.

And Cæsar that presented was,
With noble Pompey's princely head;
As 'twere some judge to rule the case,
A flood of tears he seemed to shed;
Although indeed it sprung of joy;
Yet others thought it was annoy.
Thus contraries he used to find,
Of wise to cloak the covert mind.

O cruel hap and hard estate,
That forceth me to love my foe.

These verses are still in the Hamlet vein; recalling, for example, Hamlet's disguise of madness; but they are equally close to the early scenes of "Romeo and Juliet," with its theme of "loving my foe." Mr. Looney, moreover, has pointed out (p. 30) that the lines from stanza 3—

The one that laughs at his mischief;
The other all for joy that cries:
I smile to see me scorned so,
You weep for joy to see me woe—

may have supplied material from which Shakespeare wrote, in "Lear," I, 4—[1]

They they for sudden joy did weep
And I for sorrow sung,
That such a king should play Bo-peep,
And go the fools among.

[1] See post p. 363 for my comments upon this most interesting scene from "Lear."

The next poem, "Care and Disappointment," from "The Paradise of Dainty Devices," does not shew any Shakesperean connection, that I can perceive, excepting in the last line—

> That never am less idle, lo! than when I am alone—

which compares with "Romeo and Juliet," I, 1—

> That most are busied when they are most alone—

words spoken of Romeo—who is Oxford himself, as we shall see, when we come to that play—and spoken, moreover, in that same opening scene of the tragedy, of which the preceding poem reminded us.[1]

Poems XVI and XVII, "Love is a Discord," and "Reason and Affection," are not only very Shakesperean, in general expression, but definitely recall turns of thought from "Two Gentlemen of Verona," and also from "Twelfth Night"; the lines—

> As mad with reason, we admit that force
> Which wit or labour never may divorce—

reminding one of Olivia's,

> Nor wit nor reason can my passion hide;

while this couplet—

> Love whets the dullest wits, his plagues be such,
> But makes the wise by pleasing dote as much—

is close to Viola's words (*T.N.*, III, 1) concerning the wisdom of Feste, the fool:—

> This is a practise
> As full of labour as a wise man's art.
> For folly that he wisely shews is fit;
> But wise men, folly-fall'n, quite taint their wit—

and is not very far from Malvolio, whose fate it was, in some sort, "by pleasing to dote as much."

[1] These two lines offer a good example of how the maturing, though not yet wholly mature, poet, of "Romeo and Juliet," perfected, without changing the sense of, a line written in his salad days.

The succeeding poem, "Reason and Affection," it will be seen, continues the Illyrian love-motive; for the first stanza—

If care or skill could conquer vain desire,
Or Reason's reins my strong affection stay;
There should my sighs to quiet breast retire,
And shun such signs as secret thoughts betray;
Uncomely love which now lurks in my breast
Should cease, my grief through Wisdom's power oppress'd—

not only repeats the "wit-nor-wisdom" love-theme, in slightly different words, but refers, exactly as Olivia might, with her thoughts upon Viola, to

Uncomely love which now lurks in my breast.

Very interesting also, in this connection, are the closing stanzas of the poem:—

What wordly wight can hope for heavenly hire,
When only sighs must make his secret moan?
A silent suit doth seld to grace aspire,
My hapless hap doth roll the restless stone.
Yet, Phœbe fair disdained the heavens above,
To joy on earth her poor Endymion's love.

Rare is reward where none can justly crave,
For chance is choice where Reason makes no claim;
Yet luck sometimes despairing souls doth save,
* * * * * *
Then lofty Love thy sacred sails advance,
My sighing seas shall flow with streams of tears.

Now all this, I suggest, is almost verbally paraphrased in the "thriftless sighs," the "secret moan," and the "silent suit," of those adorable characters of "Twelfth Night." As for the couplet—

For chance is choice where Reason makes no claim;
Yet luck sometimes despairing souls doth save—

is it not repeated in the "chance," that brought Sebastian, at the critical moment, to Olivia's court? and in the

" luck," that drew from Viola the word-music, concerning " salt waves " that were " fresh in love," and the fond hope—

O prove true
That I, dear brother, be now ta'en for you.

And, lest the reader should here accuse me of being too fanciful, let me point out that the motive of " sails upon the sea " is equally present, in this poem of Oxford's, on the couplet already quoted :—

Then lofty Love thy sacred sails advance,
My sighing seas shall flow with streams of tears.

Lastly, it is, perhaps, worth pointing out, that the mention of disdainful Phœbe, in stanza 3, fits in, exactly, with the " disdainful Phœbe " scenes of " As You Like It," which, as I shewed in Chapter III [1] of my book, " Shakespeare, Jonson and Wilkins as Borrowers," almost certainly supplied the dramatist with a part of his framework for the Orsino-Olivia-Viola scenes of " Twelfth Night."

Poem No. XVIII, " Love and Wit," with its theme, that the first of these is not worth the second, leads us on, naturally, to one of the most poignant of Oxford's early poems, " Woman's Changeableness," which I quote here, in part; because it reflects, exactly, the spirit of the well-known Hamlet-Ophelia duologue, in III, 1, of that play :—

If women could be fair and yet not fond,
Or that their love were firm not fickle, still,
I would not marvel that they make men bond,
By service long to purchase their good will;
But when I see how frail those creatures are,
I muse that men forget themselves so far.

Yet for disport we fawn and flatter both,
To pass the time when nothing else can please,
And train them to our lure with subtle oath,
Till, weary of their wiles, ourselves we ease;
And then we say when we their fancy try,
To play with fools, O what a fool was I.

[1] pp. 35-42.

Set against these lines Hamlet's phrase, "Frailty, thy name is woman"; "(brief) as woman's love," and this, to Ophelia :—

> Marry a fool; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them—

add to the list Ophelia's plaintive mourning, over the lost "honey of his music vows"; and the parallel becomes convincing. Turning from "Hamlet" to "Romeo and Juliet," this line :—

> Unsettled still like haggards wild they range,
> Those gentle birds

is interesting, because, though with the respective sexes characteristically transposed, its falconry theme, and the use of the adjective "gentle," with the word "lure," following five lines lower down, recalls Juliet (II, 2) :—

> O for a falconer's voice
> To lure this tassel-gentle back again;

and also verse 173 of "Venus and Adonis" :—

> As falcons to the lure, away she flies—

a stanza in which, by the way, occur the two primary motives of the Oxford coat-of-arms, namely the boar, and the mullet, or star.

While upon this subject of the relation between Oxford's early poems, and "Romeo and Juliet," I should like to quote the short poem, "Doth Sorrow Fret Thy Soul," from page 40 of Mr. Looney's book—

> Doth sorrow fret thy soul? O direful sprite.
> Doth pleasure fret thy heart? O blessed man.
> Hast thou been happy once? O heavy plight.
> Are thy mishaps forepast? O happy than (then)
> Or hast thou bliss in eld? O bliss too late.
> But hast thou bliss in youth? O sweet estate—

of which the first five words are very close, in meaning, as also in rhythm, to Romeo's "Dry sorrow drinks our

blood"; while the whole poem not merely recalls Juliet's line, immediately following—

O fortune, fortune, all men call thee fickle—[1]

but also, with its burden of broken happiness, "bliss in youth," and "bliss too late," is almost an epitome of the young lovers' fates. Here, however, it is time to remind the reader that, intensely subjective though these poems be, Oxford, nevertheless, was not long to remain wholly an individualist in letters; but, as Capt. Ward has pointed out, in his "Life of the Earl," [2] was to become, by the close of the 'seventies, leader of one of the literary court-factions of the day, namely the Euphuists, whose rivals, the Romantic party, were headed by Oxford's rival, in literature and in love, Philip Sidney, who, evidently, kept a close eye upon Oxford's work; for when the Earl had written;

Were I a king I might command content;
Were I obscure unknown would be my cares,
And were I dead no thoughts should me torment,
Nor words, nor wrongs, nor love, nor hate, nor fears;
A doubtful choice of these things which to crave,
A kingdom or a cottage or a grave—

Sidney made this neat reply, wholly in character, by the way, with his imitative aptitudes, as Aguecheek in "Twelfth Night":—[3]

Wert thou a king yet not command content,
Since empire none thy mind could yet suffice,
Wert thou obscure still cares would thee torment;
But wert thou dead all care and sorrow dies;
An easy choice of these things which to crave,
No kingdom nor a cottage, but a grave—

I insert here that pretty little duel of wits, not only because, as Mr. Looney has reminded us, these verses help to identify Oxford with Spenser's "Willie," in

[1] *Cf.* Oxford's use of the word "fickle" in "Woman's Changeableness," line 2.

[2] pp. 174, 175. [3] See post pp. 272–275.

"The Shepherd's Calendar," and throw light upon the remark of a certain "Cuddy," introduced as arbitrator, in a rhyming competition between Willie and Perigot—

What a judge Cuddy *were for a king*—

but also because they link up neatly with Davies of Hereford's remarks, of which I shall have more to say later,[1] concerning Shakespeare's playing of "kingly parts in sport," and being a "king among the meaner sort."

We come now to the six-line "Grief of Mind" song, which, like the one last considered, first appeared in "England's Parnassus" (1600). It is Oxfordian, through and through, and Shakesperean also; its very characteristic theme being epitomized in its first, and best, line—

What plague is greater than the grief of mind?

Many are the links this little poem supplies with Shakespeare's early tragedies; for the references to grief number twenty-six in "Richard II" alone; the expression that comes nearest to this particular poem being "sorrow and grief of heart" (*Rich. II*, III, 3), though the above quoted line of Oxford's suggests, as well, words that occur in two other plays, of which, as we have seen, Oxford's songs repeatedly remind us, namely "Hamlet," II, 1—"Bear our hearts in grief"—and Peter's song, in "Romeo and Juliet" (IV, 5)—

When griping grief the heart doth wound
And doleful dumps the mind oppress.

The last song in Mr. Looney's volume, written certainly by Oxford, though originally ascribed to Elizabeth, is again typical; and, in addition to its refrain, "Importune Me No More"—which, together with the first inscription, to the queen, has, as we shall see, a very interesting connection with "Two Gentlemen of Verona" (V, 4)[2]—contains words, "I have no skill to shew," comparable with stanza 12, of "Lucrece"—

[1] Post pp. 125–127. [2] See post pp. 230–232.

Which far exceeds his barren skill to shew.

The third stanza of Oxford's poem, commencing,

Then spare fair Venus' son, that proud victorious boy,

links itself, moreover, with "the first heir" of Shakespeare's invention; and it is, perhaps, further worth noting, in this connection, that the burden of the song, "Importune Me No More"—implying, as it certainly does, the fascination that Oxford, undoubtedly, exercised over women—naturally links itself up with Chapman's "Revenge of Bussy" (V, 1), wherein the following dialogue occurs between Guise and Clermont, which last-named character, as I have shewn elsewhere, is Chapman's version of, or counterblast to, Hamlet.[1]

CLER. A man . . . sees
In this, our comforts made our miseries.
GUISE. How strangely thou art loved of both the sexes.

All these scenes of Chapman's tragedy, be it remembered, are packed with imitations of, and allusions to, the text of Shakespeare's play.

That poem is the last of the admittedly Oxonian songs, in Mr. Looney's edition; and a backward glance over them reveals the fact that these lyrics, as a group, besides shewing obvious analogies of thought, and of expression, with many of the Shakesperean sonnets, as also with stanzas from "Venus and Adonis," "Lucrece," and other early poems of Shakespeare, seem to foretell, and to be developed—in some instances with convincing closeness of theme, image, manner, and vocabulary—in about thirteen of the Shakesperean plays, including, as we should expect, primarily, those two most personal plays, "Hamlet" and "Romeo and Juliet"; but also "Two Gentlemen," "Love's Labour's Lost," "As You Like It," "Much Ado," "Othello," "The Comedy of Errors," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "King Lear," "Twelfth Night" and "The

[1] See "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," p. 301.

Shrew." It follows, therefore, that—whatever one may hold, concerning the actual authorship of the plays—Shakespeare's intimate familiarity with Oxford's poems is undeniable; and, if my theory of the deliberate burlesquing of "The Forsaken Man," in the Pyramus and Thisbe episode, be accepted, the inferential intimacy of mind, and freedom of method, between Oxford and Shakespeare, becomes so close as to exclude any reasonable solution of the problem, other than the personal identity of the two men.

Further, I take occasion, at this point, to forestall certain of my critics, who may endeavour to evade the task of examining, and answering, the great mass of evidence for Oxford's authorship of the Shakesperean plays, here brought together in this book, by dismissing the whole matter, as unworthy of consideration, on the ground that the style of Oxford's admitted poems, as cited in these pages, is not that of the mature Shakespeare.

To any critic who may be tempted to seek so simple an escape from a problem which he is unwilling to face, and which will become increasingly insistent, with every succeeding chapter, I answer, that no such comparison can justly be made; and that all the known facts of the case, and the legitimate inferences therefrom, support my own theory; for the following reasons. The admitted poems of Oxford are those of an amateur, of a beginner, feeling his way, whose unformed style is still influenced by that of his uncle, Lord Surrey, of Lord Vaux, and of the other early courtier-poets. They were written, for the most part, before—many of them, probably, a considerable time before—that eventful year in Oxford's life, 1576. "Venus and Adonis," though by no means the "first heir" of Shakespeare's invention—unless the adoption of the pen-name be taken as the launching into letters of a new man—was, I suspect, actually written a few years before its publication, and is, in style, fully transitional, between that of

Oxford's early poems, on the one hand, and the sonnets and early plays, such as "Two Gentlemen," on the other; the last-mentioned comedy, as we shall see further on, incorporating a very significant motive from Oxford's song, "Importune Me No More." Further, Shakespeare's perfected style, such as he uses in the noblest passages of "Macbeth," written, I maintain, not long before Oxford's death in 1604, post-dates, by another ten years or so, the period of his maturing work, of a more purely lyrical kind; as, for example, in "Romeo and Juliet." If it be granted, then, for my immediate argument, that Oxford is "Shakespeare," these early poems, that we have here considered, with their perpetual prophecies of the work to come, so far from destroying Oxford's claim, strongly support it; as forming the proven basis of a literary style, which was constantly, and progressively, evolving, and perfecting itself, from about 1570 to 1604, a period of some thirty-four years. The Elizabethan age, moreover, was one of swift development, and of comparatively brief, though tensely crowded, experience: so that, to compare the work of a stripling of twenty, with that of a mighty, and matured, genius of fifty-four years; and thence to urge some difference of style, as summary disproof of an array of evidence so formidable as that which these pages present, is, in my judgment, merely to trifle with the subject. On a question of style, the argument of this book can be no more lightly set aside, than on the many other determining questions which, in turn, it will be my duty to set before the reader.

## CHAPTER III

### LYLY'S POEMS, OXFORD, AND SHAKESPEARE

THE most natural link that offers itself, in a study such as this, between the indubitable poems of Oxford, that we have been considering, "Venus and Adonis" also, and the book of Shakespeare's Sonnets, with both of which, as I shall presently shew, he was, unquestionably, connected, is that offered by the song in Lyly's plays, which Mr. Looney wisely prints, and carefully annotates, in pages 46 to 59 of his book.

But, before passing to a brief perusal of these, it may be well to consider, for a moment, the circumstances in which Lyly's plays seem to have been produced. Oxford, as Capt. Ward has shewn, in his "Life of the Earl," [1] was the leader of the literary party, known as the Euphuists, with Lyly, Munday, and Greene, among others, behind him, whose antagonists, of the Romantic school, headed by Philip Sidney, included Spenser and Gabriel Harvey, of whom both Sidney and Harvey are caricatured in Shakesperean plays; the former as Slender in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," and, in part, as Aguecheek, in "Twelfth Night"; the latter as Holofernes, in "Love's Labour's Lost."

Lyric verse, and euphuistic prose, however, were not the only styles of literature to which Oxford had given early attention. With drama he was equally familiar from boyhood; his father, the Sixteenth Earl, having controlled a company of actors, who can be traced, in various parts of England, between the years 1555 and

[1] pp. 178-205.

1563.[1] Whether, or when, they were disbanded, I do not know; but in 1580 the Earl of Warwick's company was transferred to Lord Oxford's service; John Lyly, then the Earl's private secretary, being probably appointed, at once, to its management, and, it seems, retaining that position throughout the 'eighties, and, perhaps, for a few years longer. It may be taken as practically certain that the whole of the Lyly plays were written, and acted, while he was in Oxford's service; i.e. during the decade which immediately preceded that of the great Shakesperean output; the same decade of which Lord Lumley wrote, in "The Arte of English Poetry" (1589): "For Tragedy Lord Buckhurst and Master Edward Ferrys do deserve the highest price (? praise): the Earl of Oxford and Master Edwards of Her Majesty's Chapel for comedy, and Enterlude"—a statement that becomes the more striking if the reader will accept my suggestion, argued on page 275 of this book, that Sidney's (Aguecheek's) friend, Lord Buckhurst, part author of "Gorboduc," is the historic original of Sir Toby Belch.

Not only with our earliest drama, but also with our first playhouses, Oxford had come into close contact; since, from 1580 onwards, Hunnis, Evans and Lyly seem to have worked together, or consecutively, under Lord Oxford's patronage,[2] as respective lessees, in turn, of that early Blackfriars Theatre constructed in the Convent building, which, since 1550, had installed the Office of the Revels. Capt. Ward holds[3] that Lyly's court comedies, written at this time, may, very probably, have been collaborations between the Earl and his secretary; a possibility that is worth bearing in mind, when we remember that Lyly's "Campaspe"—songs from which, in their relation to Shakespeare's admitted

[1] Ward's "Oxford," p. 264, *et seq.* Mr. L. H. Haydon Whitehead kindly sends me the following from the Borough Acts of Sudbury, in Oxford's country: "1585. Paide to the Lorde of Oxenforde's Players ye 17 Aprill Vs."

[2] Chamber's "Elizabethan Stage," IV, 497. [3] "Oxford," p. 275.

songs, I am about to consider—was probably played at court, by the Queen's company, on December 26, 1583, with Lyly as payee for the company ;[1] and that, on March 3, the play probably given[2] was Lyly's "Sapho and Phao," which is written round precisely the same subject as "Twelfth Night"—Sapho and Phao being Queen Elizabeth, and the Duke of Alençon, as also are Olivia and Orsino of the Shakesperean comedy. The scene, let me add, is significantly laid partly in Sicily (Syracuse), where Lyly, so far as we know, had never been, but which Oxford, on his Italian tour of 1575–76, had certainly approached as near to as Palermo, on the other side of the island. Nor should it be overlooked that the setting of "Twelfth Night," ancient Illyria, across the Adriatic, is not very far from Sicily.

The Elizabethan allegory hidden within "Sapho and Phao," as set out by Mr. Bond,[3] is, according to Feuillerat, something that Lyly alone would never have dared to write; but it is an indiscretion that Oxford's secretary, with the connivance and protection, if not the actual collaboration, of Oxford himself, might, as Capt. Ward has agreed, very conceivably have screwed his courage to undertake; the author of "The Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford" making a good point, when he quotes, in support of his theory, words from Gabriel Harvey's "Pierce's Supererogation" (1593), wherein Lyly is contemptuously referred to, as "sometime the fiddlestick of Oxford, now the very babble of London."[4] This matter of the exact relation of Lyly to Oxford, and, incidentally, of Lyly to the Revels Office, is interesting and important; the more so since Capt. Ward's recent discovery[5]—that the Clerkship of the Revels was vacant from September 6, 1594, to June 15, 1603—makes it, from internal, as well as external, evidence, probable, almost to certainty, that

[1] "Oxford," p. 271. [2] Chambers, III, 414-415.
[3] "Lyly's Works," II, 366. [4] Ward's "Oxford," p. 279.
[5] "John Lyly and the Office of the Revels." "Rev. of English Studies," January, 1929.

Lyly, during that time, was employed, though unofficially, at the Revels Office. When one considers, further, that Lyly was Lord Oxford's private secretary, certainly until 1589, and probably until 1594, and further that, as we shall see later on, the Queen was granting to Oxford, out of the secret service fund, the enormous annuity of £1,000 a year—most probably in payment for dramatic work, of some kind—it certainly looks as though Lyly had been temporarily lent, by Oxford, to the Revels Office. All these facts, taken together, are of deep significance, in their relation to Lyly's, as well as to Shakespeare's plays.

Lyly's dramatic work does not come strictly within our subject; but in view of the fact, pointed out by Mr. Looney,[1] that no lyrics were inserted in them until the edition of 1632, wherein all the songs appeared simultaneously, it becomes highly probable that those songs were written, not by Lyly, but by Oxford—a supposition supported by the fact that the 1632 edition of Lyly was published by the firm that, in the same year, produced the second Folio Shakespeare. Should Oxford, then, indeed be their author—as, for my part, I think he was—these lyrics, written between 1580 and 1587—the crucial years of the early Elizabethan dramatists—supply a valuable link between Oxford's early poems, that we have just been considering, and the sonnets, and first Shakesperean plays. That their subject matter, and turn of phrase, alike, reveal a close connection with several of those plays, I will now proceed to shew.

The first two, "The Song of Apelles," and "The Song of Trico," both from "Campaspe," are thoroughly Shakesperean in feeling, whether you consider the charming opening couplet of the first of them—

> Cupid and my Campaspe play'd
> At cards for kisses, Cupid paid—

or the lark-motive of the second—

[1] "Poems of Edward de Vere," Introduction, pp. lxiv, lxv.

Now at heaven's gate she claps her wings,
The morn not waking till she sings—

that one hears again, in the song from "Cymbeline," "Hark, hark the lark" wherein the Ls and the Ws lilt musically, just as the P and K sounds chime, like the beating of cymbals, in the "Cupid and Campaspe" lines quoted above. As for Trico's closing couplet—

Hark how the jolly cuckoos sing
Cuckoo, to welcome in the spring—

it reminds us, at once, of the cuckoo song in "Love's Labour's Lost," the whole spirit of this poem of Lyly's, equally with its words, recalling also, as Mr. Looney has not failed to note, both "Romeo and Juliet," and sonnet 29—

Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth sings hymns at Heaven's gate.

Next follow, in Looney's edition, three songs from "Sapho and Phao," two of which, the "Trio to Bacchus," and "Sapho's Song," in their relations to our subject, are extremely interesting and remarkable.

SONG TO BACCHUS (TRIO).

Arm, arm, the foe comes on apace
What's that red nose and sulphury face?
'Tis the hot leader.
What's his name?
Bacchus, a captain of plump fame:
A goat the beast on which he rides,
Fat grunting swine run by his sides,
His standard-bearer fears no knocks,
For he's a drunken butter-box,
Who when ith' red field thus he revels,
Cries out "ten towsan ton of Tivells."
What's he so swaggers in the van?
O! that's a roaring Englishman,
Who in deep healths does so excel,
From Dutch and French he bears the bell.
What victualers follow Bacchus' camps?
Fools, fiddlers, panders, pimps and ramps.

See, see, the battle now grows hot,
Here legs fly, here goes heads to th' pot,
Here whores and knaves toss broken glasses,
Here all the soldiers look like asses.
What man e'er heard such hideous noise?
O' that's the vintner's bawling boys.

Rush in, and let's our forces try.
O no, for see they fly, they fly!
And so will I, and I,
And I.
'Tis a hot day in drink to die.

Now in this vigorous ditty we have thought after thought, and image after image, all bearing us away to one or other of the Shakesperean plays, the first of these being "Antony and Cleopatra," II, 7, as noted by Mr. Looney, wherein "plumpy Bacchus with pink eyne," in the reveller's song, seems to be taken directly from "red-nosed Bacchus, a captain of plump fame," as here described by Lyly, or by Oxford: an equally direct personal analogy hereabouts, being, one would say, this, to our old friends of the Pistol crew, including particularly Bardolph, the fly on whose nose, "like a lost soul burning in hell fire," comes near to

That red nose and sulphury face?
'Tis the hot leader—

while the first ten lines of the song recall also, and very vividly, the fat knight, as may be seen by a parallel glance or two, such as these.

For he's a drunken butter-box.

FALST. I am as subject to heat as butter. (*Merry Wives*, III, 5.)

From Dutch and French he bears the bell.

FALST. I will rather trust a Fleming with my butter, Parson Hugh the Welshman with my cheese. (*Merry Wives*, II, 2.)

Cries out "ten tousan ton of Tivells."

FALST. Yet they are devils additions, the names of fiends. (*Merry Wives*, II, 2.)

The above, with other subtler resemblances, lead me to

think that Shakespeare may have built up some of the Falstaffian dialogue of "Merry Wives," in part, upon that song, and not a whit less striking is the ditty's evident relation to scene 5 of the same comedy's fifth act, with which, also, as I shall shew later on, two songs from "Endymion" are also connected. If the reader will compare the passage beginning

His standard-bearer fears no knocks;

and ending

From Dutch and French he bears the bell

with the talk between the Welshman Evans and Falstaff, where also you get the "butter," "belly," mixed nationalities, and "fritters of English" motives, all worked in together, along with other themes common to the song and the play, including, not far distant in the text, those of "pander" and "pimp," the connection becomes indisputable. Here are two of the lines in question ("Merry Wives," V, 5).

EVANS. Your pelly is all putter.
FALST. "Seese" and "putter"? Have I lived to stand out the taunt of one that makes fritters of English?

Yet one more Shakesperean play, however, to my thinking, the last half of this song recalls, namely "Twelfth Night," and particularly the kitchen-scene, which, also, has a fool in it, a fiddler, an ass, and several "heads to the pot"; and in which Malvolio, awakened by the mid-night revellers, protests, almost in the words of the song;—

What man e'er heard such hideous noise?
O' that's the vintner's bawling boys—

while relationship is easily visible between Lyly's trio of Bacchus worshippers, and Toby's "Three merry men be we!" as also in the last line of the song, we are considering—"'Tis a hot day in drink to die"—contrasted with "O! the twelfth day of December"

and the clown's " His eyes do shew his days are almost done."

It seems to me, moreover, that there may well be direct relationship not merely between the songs inserted into " Sapho and Phao," and " Twelfth Night," but also between the texts of the two plays; for we have seen that, by general consent of the critics, Lyly's comedy is an allegory upon the Alençon courtship, just as is " Twelfth Night " also, after its kind;[1] and, in this connection, I will quote here a duologue between Trachinus (the courtier) and Pandion (the scholar) in the second scene of act one.

> Trach. Believe me Pandion, in Athens you have but tombs, we in court the bodies, you the pictures of Venus and the wise Goddesses, we the persons and the vertues. What hath a scholler found out by study, that a courtier hath not found out by practice? Simple are you that think to see more at the candle snuffe then the sunne beams, to saile further in a little brooke, than in the maine Ocean, to make a greater harvest by gleaning, then reaping. How say say you, Pandion, is not all this true?
>
> Pandi. Trachinus, what would you more, all true.
>
> Trachi. Cease then to live thy life in a study, pinned with a fewe boardes, and endevour to be a courtier to live in emboste rouffes.

Now all this is suggestive of Viola, the maid, who, upon emergency, decides, and rightly, that she will make a greater harvest by reaping at the court, than by gleaning out of it; and the passage is further interesting in itself, as expressing perfectly the point of view of a man who, like Oxford, was bred from boyhood at court, and again, as emphasizing the probability that the Shakesperean plays, intimately concerned, as they are, from first to last, with courtiers, and with court matters, must necessarily, have been written by one from whom the " sunne beams " of direct courtly vision had not been

[1] See " Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," cap. II.

withheld. No less pertinent to our enquiry is the following passage from the fourth scene of act one.

> MILETA. Is it not straunge that Phao on the sodain should be so faire?
>
> LAMIA. It cannot be straunge, sith Venus was disposed to make him faire. That cunning had beene better bestowed on woman, which would have deserved thanks of nature.
>
> ISMENA. Haplye she did it in spite of women, or scorne of nature.
>
> CANOPE. Proud elfe! how squeamish he is become alreadie, using both disdainful lookes and imperious words; insomuch that he galleth with ingratitude. And the Ladies, you know how it cutteth a woman to become a wooer.

All this talk is very close indeed to Viola, disguised as a boy, who might have been actually referred to, in the words, "That cunning had beene better bestowed on woman, which would have deserved thanks of nature," as also might her creator, in Ismena's remark, that the thing was done "in spite of women, or scorne of nature." As for Canope's speech, it is almost a description of Viola's bearing at Olivia's court, and closes with what might have been a reference to Olivia's wooing of the girl, also done "in scorne of nature." Between the play of "Sapho and Phao," then, including its song to Bacchus, and "Twelfth Night," there exist, quite evidently, certain close and even intimate mental and textual relations, which will be supported, to some extent, by what I shall argue, in a future chapter, concerning the historic identity of that staunch follower of Bacchus, Sir Toby Belch, from whom I shall quote in a moment.

Further on in the play (II, 2), the duologue between Molus and Criticus contains several lines that may well have suggested the working-up of Sir Andrew, by the conspirators, to the challenge and the duel.

CRITI. Tomorrow ther shalbe a desperate fray betweene two, made at all weapons, from the browne bill to the bodkin.

MOLUS. Now thou talkest of frays, I pray thee what is that, whereof they talke so commonlye in courte, valour, the stab, the pistol, for which every man that dareth is so much honoured?

CRITI. O Molus, beware of valour! hee that can looke bigge, and weare his dagger pomel lower than the point . . . and will into the field man to man for a boute or two, he, Molus, is a shrewd fellow, and shall be well followed.

MOLUS. What is the end?

CRITI. Danger or death.

MOLUS. If it be but death that bringeth all this commendation, I account him as valiant that is killed with a surfet, as with a sword.

Here you have, not only a situation analagous to that summed up in Sir Toby's phrase to Sir Andrew (*T.N.*, II, 2)—"Why, then, build me thy fortunes upon the basis of valour . . . there is no love-broker in the world can more prevail in a man's commendation with women than report of valour"—but you have also the use of the same word, "commendation," accompanied by a mock at duelling. In the fourth scene, of the same act, the parallels continue; for here Phao, otherwise the Duke of Alençon (Orsino) uses phrase after phrase that recalls the Orsino-Olivia-Viola dialogues of "Twelfth Night"—Sapho, in Lyly's play, being Queen Elizabeth-Olivia. Here are some of the suggestive lines.

Die Phao, die . . . the more thou seekest to suppress those mounting affections, they soare the loftier. . . .

Peace, miserable wretch, enjoy thy care in covert, weare willow in thy hatte, and baies in thy hart. . . . Let thy love hang at thy heart's bottome, not at the tongue's brimme. Things untold, are undone. . . . But ah! thy bewty Sapho, thy beauty! . . . Swannes that end their lives with songs, are covered when they are dead with flowers.[1]

[1] Oxford himself, I think, was, at one time, or thought he was, in love with Queen Elizabeth. Most of the Elizabethan courtiers were so. It was politic.

All of this recalls, at one moment the Duke's passion, and at another Viola's silence, closing upon the very atmosphere of the clown's song, "Come away, Death!" that "dallies with the innocence of love," and not only contains the flower-motive—"not a flower, not a flower sweet"—but sets also, against the willows and bays of Lyly, Shakespeare's cypress and yew. It is further remarkable that, just as Phao's monologue, from which we have quoted, follows immediately upon a drinking song, in trio, by Criticus, Molus, and Calypho :—

> Critt. Mery knaves are we three-a
> Molus. When our songs do agree-a
> Critt. If we ply their own singing
> Molus. Pots then must be flinging—

so also the corresponding scene in "Twelfth Night," between Viola, the Duke, and the Clown (II, 4), is immediately preceded by the kitchen-scene, also to an accompaniment of songs and potations, with Sir Toby almost echoing Criticus, in "Three merry men be we." The "Bacchus" song, of which, as we have seen, Shakespeare also made use, comes later on, in "Sapho and Phao," III, 2; but in IV, 2, the close of Venus' speech to Cupid is very remarkable. It runs

> "But were Sapho never so virtuous, doth she thinke to contend with Venus to be as amorous? Yeilde Phao! but yeeld to me Phao. I entreat where I may command; commande thou, where thou shouldest entreate. In this case Cupid what is thy counsell? Venus must both play the lover and the dissembler, and therefore the dissembler, because the lover—

and I need hardly point out to the reader, that it needs but very little distortion to fit these words to the circumstances of the forged letter to Malvolio, with its, "I command where I adore," for Lyly's "I entreate where I may command"; the love-motive being equally present, and the Sapho-Elizabeth, of the one play, being the Olivia-Elizabeth of the other. Concerning the close

connection between the two plays, I have, personally, no doubt whatever.

Now let us turn to the last of the songs from "Sapho and Phao," namely Sapho's own song, which will recall, at once, a play that echoes also two other songs in our list, those from "Endymion." In my "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," I shewed, quite clearly, I hope, that in constructing and writing the play to which I refer, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," Shakespeare drew certainly upon one of his own plays, "Love's Labour's Lost," as well as upon a second drama, in which, probably, he had some hand, "Titus Andronicus"; [1] it being his persistent habit to use again, and to work over, words, ideas, and figures of speech which he had used in earlier poems or plays. Similarly, this Sapho's song, which I here quote, and those which follow it in Mr. Looney's book, contain, undeniably, ideas that are made use of in "The Dream."

SAPHO'S SONG.

O cruel love! on thee I lay
My curse, which shall strike blind the day:
Never may sleep with velvet hand
Charm thine eyes with sacred wand;
Thy jailers shall be hopes and fears;
Thy prison mates groans, sighs and tears,
Thy play to wear out weary times,
Fantastic passions, vows and rhymes;
Thy bread be frowns, thy drink be gall,
Such as when you Phao call.
The bed thou liest on be despair;
Thy sleep, fond dreams; thy dreams, long care;
Hope (like thy fool) at thy bed's head,
Mock thee, till madness strikes thee dead.

This song, I suggest, is packed with the motives of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; its first four lines

[1] For a third play as part source of "The Dream," namely "The Comedy of Errors," see post pp. 238–239.

recalling, not only the craft practised by Oberon upon Titania, but also the words of Puck (II, 2)—

> Churl, upon thy eyes I throw
> All the power this charm doth owe;

and the last three being echoed by Bottom's fond dream, while the couplet—

> Thy play to wear out weary times,[1]
> Fantastic passions, vows and rhymes.

is exactly such a play as "The Dream" actually became. I think it, in fact, highly probable that this song of Sapho's, from Lyly's play, gave Shakespeare his first idea for "The Dream," in which connection I would remind the reader that Miss Rickert, in her penetrating essay upon that fantasy, identifies Titania with Queen Elizabeth.

Let us pass on now to "Endymion," and its trio song, "The Amorous Knight," which here I quote in full.

> Here snores Tophas,
> That amorous ass,
> Who loves Dipsas
> With face so sweet,
> Nose and chin meet.
> At sight of her each Fury skips,
> And flings into her lap their whips.
>
> Holla, holla, in his ear,
> The witch sure thrust her fingers there,
> Cramp him or wring the fool by th' nose
> Or clap some burning flax to his toes.
>
> What music's best to wake him,
> Baw, wow, let bandogs shake him,
> Let adders hiss in's ear,
> Else ear-wigs wriggle there.

[1] *Cf. M.N.D.*, V 1:

> THESEUS. What dances shall we have,
> To wear away this long age of three hours
> . . . How shall we beguile
> The lazy time, if not with some delight!

The words "wear" and "time" occur in both passages.

No, let him batten, when his tongue
Once goes, a cat is not worse strung;
But if he ope nor mouth nor eyes,
He may in time sleep himself wise.

Now here the Dream motives are still quite easily traceable, in "that amorous ass," and also in the couplet—

Let adders hiss in's ear,
Else ear-wigs wriggle there—

which not only links up with the lullaby song, for Titania, on the line preceding,

What music's best to wake him,

but also has obvious verbal connections with "The Dream"; the hissing adders, and wriggling ear-wigs, of the song, linking up with the "spotted snakes," "weaving spiders," and "beetles black," of the comedy; though I must add that the "black" and "spotted" motives do not appear in this ditty, but in the "Song of the Fairies," [1] which, following in Mr. Looney's edition, runs thus.

Pinch him, pinch him, black and blue,
Saucy mortals must not view
What the Queen of Stars is doing,
Nor pry into our fairy wooing.
Pinch him blue,
And pinch him black.
Let him not lack
Sharp nails to pinch him blue and red,
Till sleep hath rock'd his addle head.

For the trespass he hath done,
Spots o'er all his flesh shall run,
Kiss Endymion, kiss his eyes,
Then to our midnight Heidegyes.

In this ditty, the connection of word and rhythm, sound and sense, between such lines as,

Saucy mortals must not view
What the Queen of Stars is doing,

[1] "The Dream" has many verbal analogies with "Venus and Adonis," some of which will be pointed out in the next chapter.

and the passage from the fairies' lullaby-song, over Titania—

> You spotted snakes with double tongue,
> Thorny hedgehogs be not seen;
> Newts, and blind-worms, do no wrong;
> Come not near our fairy queen—

will be apparent to all readers, now that they are provided with the cues; and it is further interesting to note, that the "punishment-for-trespass" motive, and a general atmosphere of Shakesperean fantasy, pervade the song, down to its last line,

> Then to our Midnight Heidegyes,

recalling Titania's,

> Then to your offices and let me rest—

and all that riot of lyrical beauty that follows upon Theseus' words :—

> The iron tongue of midnight hath told twelve.

"A Midsummer Night's Dream," however, is not the only Shakesperean comedy, the spirit of which these two fascinating songs from "Endymion" evoke. Another, suggested by the title of the first song, "The Amorous Knight," is, as Mr. Looney has pointed out, "The Merry Wives of Windsor"; for it is undeniable that such lines as

> Cramp him or wring the fool by the nose
> Or clap some burning flax to his toes,

and

> Pinch him blue
> And pinch him black

are very close to the fairies' song, in "Merry Wives," V, 5—

> Pinch him, fairies, mutually;
> Pinch him for his villainy;
> Pinch him and burn him, and turn him about,
> Till candles and starlight and moonshine be out.

This "pinch-him-black-and-blue" motive is visible, also, in another interesting early play, namely "A Comedy of Errors" (II, 2), a scene which, apparently, must be added to the several already cited sources, from which Shakespeare borrowed ideas and material for "The Dream."

ADRIANA. How comes it now, my husband, O, how comes it,
That thou art thus estranged from thyself?
ANTIPH. OF SYR. What, was I married to her in my dream? . . .
What error drives our eyes and ears amiss!
DROMIO OF SYR. This is the fairy land, O spite of spites!
We talk with goblins, owls and sprites.
If we obey them not, this will ensue,
They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue.

I am transformed, master, am not I?
. . . both in mind and in my shape.
LUCIANA. 'Tis to an ass.
DROMIO OF SYR. 'Tis true; she rides me, and I long for grass.
ADRIANA. Whilst man and master laughs my woes to scorn
. . . a thousand idle pranks.
ANTIPH OF SYR. Sleeping or waking? . . .
I'll say as they say, and persever so,
And in this mist at all adventures go.

Let the reader run his eye down those excerpts, and, retaining the mental pictures they create, compare them with the Fairyland of "The Dream," with the quarrels of Oberon and Titania, and the Fairy King's device for revenge; then with Bottom's, "Thou art translated"; with "Good hay, sweet hay hath no fellow"; with Puck's parting words, concerning

this weak and idle theme,
No more yielding than a dream—

and he cannot, surely, but admit that, here also, Shakespeare found ideas, and matter, for his fairy-comedy.

Turning now to Lyly's play, "Midas," with its "Song of Pan," and "Song to Apollo," we find that, here again, Shakespeare seems to have incorporated from them words and ideas into two of his own most famous songs; the first being that to Silvia, in "Two Gentlemen of Verona," wherein, as I shall try to shew, in a later chapter, Silvia seems to stand for Queen Elizabeth, and Valentine for Oxford.[1] The opening lines of the Pan song are as follows:—

> Pan's Syrinx was a girl indeed,
> Though now she's turned into a reed,
> From that dear reed Pan's pipe doth come,
> A pipe that strikes Apollo dumb;
> Nor flute, nor lute, nor glittern can
> So chant it as the pipe of Pan;
> Cross-garter'd swains and dairy girls,
> With faces smug and round as pearls.

Now the links between this poem, and "Silvia," may not become apparent, at first reading; yet I feel certain that they are no mere fancy of my own; for the first line, "Syrinx was a girl indeed," begins upon the picture of a woman who has the same two letters, at the beginning of her name, and conveys the same idea of "excelling," that is expressed in Shakespeare's third verse; while the "swains" of Lyly's, or of Oxford's, seventh line are echoed in the second line of Shakespeare's song. The "excelling" motive, moreover, is again repeated in the couplet:—

> Nor flute, nor lute, nor glittern can
> So chant it as the pipe of Pan—

wherein also the singing motive—"Then to Silvia let us sing"—is repeated; and mention of Pan, as an immortal, is twisted into praise of Sylvia, as one who "excels each mortal thing"; all of which parallels are

[1] See post pp. 223–226.

enforced, and corroborated, by the very interesting fact, that the next Song to Apollo, from the same play, "Midas," repeats several themes which also are elaborated, or rather perfected, in the same song to Sylvia, and in another, no less lovely—Cloten's song, "Hark, hark the lark!" in "Cymbeline."[1] Here is the

SONG TO APOLLO.

Sing to Apollo, God of Day,
Whose golden beams with morning play,
And make her eyes so brightly shine,
Aurora's face is called divine.
Sing to Phœbus, and that throne
Of diamonds which he sits upon;
Io pæans let us sing
To physic's and to poesie's king.

Crown all his altars with bright fire,
Laurels bind about his lyre,
A Daphnean coronet for his head,
The Muses dance about his bed;
When on his ravishing lute he plays,
Strew his temple round with bays.
Io pæans let us sing
To the glittering Delian king.

Reading it we detect at once the material whence he drew further ideas for Sylvia; the "divinity" of Aurora's face being matched by "She excels each mortal thing"; the couplet—

Io pæans let us sing
To physic's and to poesie's king,

simplified into "Then to Sylvia let us sing"; "A Daphnean coronet for his head" furnishing "garlands," for the decking of the maid; and all the general "kindness," done to Apollo, throughout the song, being summed-up in Shakespeare's lines:—

[1] I shall shew in cap. VII (pp. 224–232) that Sylvia is, almost certainly, Queen Elizabeth, and that the refrain from Oxford's song, "Importune Me No More," originally ascribed to Queen Elizabeth, is worked into the fifth act of "Two Gentlemen."

Is she kind as she is fair,
For beauty dwells with kindness?

Shakespeare, in fact, has idealized, and perfected, his song, by bringing its subject down from heaven to earth, and from the divine to the divinely human.[1] Nor is this all his debt to these verses; for "Hark, hark the lark!" quite evidently, has also found inspiration here.

Hark, hark the lark at heaven's gate sings,
And Phœbus 'gins arise,
His steeds to water at those springs
On chaliced flowers that lies;

And winking Mary-buds begin
To ope their golden eyes;
With every thing that pretty is,
My lady sweet, arise;
Arise, arise!

Most striking are the parallels between these verses. Apollo, of the one song, is given his alternative name, Phœbus, in the other; the reflected "golden beams," of Oxford, become Shakespeare's "golden eyes"; and the diamond motive, also, is repeated, in the dew that sparkles upon those "chaliced flowers": this "Song to Apollo" being, one may say, a mosaic of word-pictures and images, upon which the mature Shakespeare fastened, for the shaping of two of the sweetest lyrics in our language.

Of the remaining Oxford poems, in Mr. Looney's edition, I shall say nothing; except to refer the reader to page 62 of that book, wherein its Editor, referring to Ignoto's (Oxford's) poem, "The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd"—which in "England's Helicon," where it first appeared, is preceded by Marlowe's poem, "Come Live with me and be my Love"—shews another interesting connection, through that poet, between Oxford's work, and the early Shakesperean period.

[1] Even the word "physic's," with its suggestion of healing, is echoed in the words "To heal him of his blindness."

It only remains, so far as this chapter is concerned, to summarize, very briefly, its purport, which is that, just as, in Chapter II, we saw how songs and poems, admittedly written by Oxford, had been used, with purposes both serious and mocking, in some thirteen Shakesperean plays; so also these songs in the Lyly plays —songs written by Oxford—had been subsequently made use of, either in dramatic dialogue, or as material for other, and better, songs, in a large number of Shakesperean plays, including, apparently, "Love's Labour's Lost," "Henry V," "Merry Wives of Windsor," "Twelfth Night," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "The Comedy of Errors," "Two Gentlemen of Verona," and "Cymbeline." As further evidence of deliberate intention, it is noteworthy that, when two songs are included in the same Lyly play—as, for example, in "Endymion"—matter from both of them is worked into the same Shakesperean play, in this case, "The "Merry Wives"; just as material from both the two songs in "Midas" correspondingly appears in a single song by Shakespeare, namely, "Who is Sylvia?" in "Two Gentlemen of Verona." From all which I conclude, not only that Oxford was, in fact, the author of the songs inserted in Lyly's plays, but that those songs were consciously, and intimately, present to the mind of Shakespeare, when he was busy upon certain plays.

## CHAPTER IV

### "VENUS" AND "LUCRECE" IN RELATION TO LORD OXFORD AND THE SHAKESPEREAN PLAYS

My last two chapters have been given to a consideration of the relationship of Oxford's poems to Shakespeare. It is now time to examine the connection between Shakespeare's early poems and Oxford; a process which will be found to yield results at least equally interesting and important.

We will begin with "Venus and Adonis," which, it is interesting to note, was first printed by one Richard Field, son of Henry Field, a tanner of Stratford-on-Avon, who had been apprenticed to a London printer in 1579. One of his first individual enterprises was a beautiful edition of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," in 1589, while three years later, in 1592, the father of "Shakespeare"—i.e. of the Stratford actor—was busy appraising the goods of Richard's father, Henry Field. "Venus and Adonis" appeared in 1593, with William Shakespeare's name appearing, for the first time in English literature, under the dedication, though Greene's famous attack on "Shake-scene" [1] had already appeared, in 1592. Here, then, begin the strange complications between what I hold to be the genuine and the spurious Shakespeare, upon whose relations with one another it is the business of this book to shed, if possible, some illumination.

When composing this "first heir of his invention"—a poem which, though, perhaps, written a year or two

[1] Actually aimed at Oxford. See post pp. 119–127.

before its date of publication, 1593, I suppose to be actually nothing of the kind—its author scattered among the stanzas a number of lines that his ranging fancy, in later years, was to capture again, and weave into more mature work; so that, upon almost every page, we are gladly reminded of unforgettable passages in the plays to come. In the 26th stanza of "Venus," for example, Venus's words :—

> Witness this primrose bank whereon I lie;
> These forceless flowers

recall, at once, Hermia's;

> And in the wood, where often you and I
> Upon faint primrose-beds were wont to lie;

while the closing line of the 28th stanza—

> Thou wast begot,—to get it is thy duty—

with others that follow, form the burden of stanza after stanza of the sonnets.

This brings us to a striking motive in "Venus and Adonis," that links itself up, very naturally, with a motive taken, in common with several in the sonnets, from an experience in the life-story of one of Oxford's ancestors.

Adonis, in stanza 43, springs from the "twining arms" of Venus, and "hasteth to his horse."

> But, lo, from forth a copse that neighbours by,
> A breeding jennet, lusty, young and proud,
> Adonis' trampling courser doth espy,
> And forth she rushes, snorts and neighs aloud.
> The strong-neck'd steed, being tied unto a tree,
> Breaketh his rein and to her straight goes he.

The boy's mount having been thus captured, by "the fair breeder that is standing by"—these verses, therefore, continuing the "begetting" motive of the sonnets, to which I have already referred—I pass on to the 49th stanza :—

Look, when a painter would surpass the life,
In limning out a well proportion'd steed,
His art with nature's workmanship at strife,
As if the dead the living should exceed;
So did this horse excel a common one,
In shape, in courage, colour, pace and bone—

the words of which are to me remarkable, by reason of their closeness to Ben Jonson's lines, opposite to the portrait page of the First Folio, that runs :—

This figure that thou here seest put,
It was for gentle Shakespeare cut;
Wherein the Graver had a strife
With Nature to out-doo the life.
O, could he but have drawne his wit
As well in brasse as he hath hit
His face; the Print would then surpasse
All, that was ever writ in brasse.

In both these quotations is expressed the idea of strife between nature and the craftsman's art, for supremacy, in portraying, in the first instance a horse, in the second a poet's face; and in both we find the idea of outstanding excellence, supreme over the ordinary; and, further, in both a veiled hint of mystery, and of concealment, which, as we shall see, in the course of this volume, comes out clearly, again and again, in the plays as well as in the poems; as though, in each case, the writer of the lines were shrouding, in death-like obscurity, some living, or formerly living, individuality concealed behind his words. In this business of the horse, moreover, there is, as I am about to shew, not personal symbolism merely, but family history as well; for need I remind my readers that Oxford's accomplished skill in horsemanship, like Shakespeare's skill in writing of it, are matters of common knowledge. Thus Giles Fletcher, writing of Oxford, in Latin verses :— [1]

[1] Eclogue. In nuptias clarissimi D. Edouardi Vere. Hatfield MSS. (Cal. XIII, 109). Quoted Ward's "Oxford," pp. 60, 61. See also Looney's "Shakespeare Identified," pp. 248-250.

> But if at any time with fiery energy he should call up a mimicry of war, he controls his foaming steed with a light rein, & armed with a long spear rides to the encounter. Fearlessly he settles himself in the saddle, gracefully bending his body this way and that. Now he circles round; now with spurred heel he rouses his charger. . . .

and so forth, for another ten lines.

I pass on to the 98th and 99th stanzas, wherein Adonis expresses his intention to hunt the boar :—

> tomorrow he intends
> To hunt the boar with certain of his friends.
> " The boar " quoth she : whereat a sudden pale,
> Like lawn being spread upon the blushing rose,
> Usurps her cheek ; she trembles at his tale.

Here, it seems, we have, again, more significance than at once meets the eye ; for the boar (*verres*) was the pictorial name of the de Veres, as all know, who, like the author of this book, have wandered through the churches of Castle Hedingham, Lavenham, and other places in northern Essex, or over the Suffolk border, wherein the boar and the mullet, or star, of the de Veres become familiar local emblems. " The boar," moreover, was one of the names by which the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford was personally known ; as witness this extract from a quaint love-letter, written by Christopher Hatton, Captain of the Queen's Bodyguard, to Elizabeth, in 1572.

> It (a gift from the queen) is a gracious favour most dear and welcome unto me : reserve it to the Sheep (Elizabeth's nickname for Hatton), he hath no tooth to bite, where (as) the boar's tusk may both raze and tear.[1]

But it may be asked of me, at this point—since the boar is an animal quite usually hunted, in classical times and lands—what evidence I can produce shewing any special significance, or application to Oxford, in the

[1] Ward's " Oxford," pp. 74, 75. Hatton was, probably, in part, a historic original of Malvolio. See my " Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 39-45.

animal's introduction here. I answer by quoting stanza 119, and the first two lines of stanza 120.

> "Lie quietly, and hear a little more;
> Nay, do not struggle, for thou shalt not rise:
> To make thee hate the hunting of the boar,
> Unlike myself thou hear'st me moralize,
> Applying this to that, and so to so;
> For love can comment upon every woe."

Now here we have, surely, a pretty open hint that, in this story, there is possible application of "this to that, and so to so"; and, in proof thereof, I quote from Capt. Ward's "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," the following apposite story, concerning Oxford's father, the Sixteenth Earl.

> By reason of his warlike disposition, we read, he was invited to the hunting of a wild boar, a sport mixed with much danger and deserving the best man's care for his preservation and safety. Whence it comes that the Frenchmen, when they hunt this beast, are ever armed with light arms, mounted on horseback, and having chasing staves like lances in their hands. To this sport the Earl of Oxford goes; but no otherwise attired than as when he walked in his own private bedchamber, only a dancing rapier by his side; neither any better mounted than on a plain English Tracconer or ambling nag. Anon the boar is put on foot (which was a beast both huge and fierce), the chase is eagerly pursued, many affrights are given, and many dangers escaped. At last the Earl, weary of the toil or else urged by some other necessity, alights from his horse and walks alone by himself on foot; when suddenly down the path in which the Earl walked came the enraged beast, with his mouth all foamy, his teeth whetted, his bristles up, and all other signs of fury and anger. The gallants of France cry unto the Earl to run aside and save himself; everyone holloed out that he was lost, and (more than their wishes) none there was that durst bring him succour. But the Earl . . . alters not his pace nor goes an hair's breadth out of his path; and finding that the boar and he must struggle for passage,

draws out his rapier and at the first encounter slew the boar. Which, when the French nobility perceived, they came galloping in unto him and made the wonder in their distracted amazements. . . . And so they returned to Paris with the slain beast, where the wonder did neither decrease nor die, but to this day lives in many of their old annals.

That Oxford, when he wrote "Venus and Adonis," had his father's adventure in mind, seems to me a safe conclusion. The parallels are obvious. In each case the huntsman is at first mounted, but ultimately attacks the boar on foot; though in the story we are not told, as we are in the poem, that the horse was enticed away by a mare. Further, in stanza 103, Venus makes reference to the danger of goring a churlish swine "with javelin's point," which would be about as insufficient a weapon as the "dancing rapier" used by Oxford's father, for the same purpose. The poem, following upon the suggestion concerning

Applying this to that, and so to so,

in stanza 119 continues,

"Where did I leave?" "No matter where," quoth he,
Leave me, and then the story aptly ends.

These lines also are deeply significant, and powerfully suggestive of symbolism, and hidden meaning, in the poem; for on the moment that the question "where?" arises, Adonis-Oxford—for the Earl stands for both boy and boar—suggests that it is time the story should now "aptly end," which is just such a sudden break off, and disappearance of the protagonist, into darkness and mystery, as we have seen, a few moments before, when speaking of the 49th stanza, and shall see repeated, though with far deeper and more intentional significance, when we come to such plays as "As You Like It," "Romeo and Juliet," and "King Lear," with their

hidden clues to the identity of their actual author, and the hints of eventual revelation.[1]

That Queen Elizabeth well knew "the boar" to stand for Oxford, the reader will already have gathered, from Sir Christopher Hatton's letter. I will now ask him to note, that the second line of stanza 122—

> Now of this dark night I perceive the reason:
> Cynthia for shame obscures her silver shine—

seems again to link up with the mystery of the poem the name of Queen Elizabeth, who was often referred to as the moon-goddess, or the moon, and is given the name Cynthia, in Jonson's play, "Cynthia's Revels," produced in 1,600;[2] immediately upon which, apparently linking together the author of "Venus" and the queen, we get verse 123—

> And therefore hath she bribed the Destinies
> To cross the curious workmanship of nature,
> To mingle beauty with infirmities
> And pure perfection with impure defeature;
> Making it subject to the tyranny
> Of mad mischances and much misery;

wherein you get not only another forward glance toward the mad mischances, and infirm beauties, of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," but also a strangely exact epitome of the complex mental make-up of Lord Oxford, and also, I think, a hint of the strange destinies, in which his temperamental defects involved him.

Some twenty stanzas further on, in Nos. 139 and 140, we pick up Oxford links again, in the shape of certain remarkable parallels with one of his best known songs, namely the "Echo" song, upon which, in its relation to Hamlet and Ophelia, as also to "Romeo and Juliet"—

[1] *Cf.* also the Page's words, at the close of the Introduction to "The Shrew": "It is a kind of history." The whole of Shakespeare is that.

[2] Spenser had praised Elizabeth extravagantly as "Cynthia" in "Colin Clout's Come Home Again" (1591).

" the cave where Echo lies "—I have already commented, in this book. These are the stanzas.

> And now she beats her heart, whereat it groans,
> That all the neighbour caves, as seeming troubled,
> Make verbal repetition of her moans ;
> Passion on passion deeply is redoubled :
> " Ay me ! " she cried, and twenty times " Woe, woe ! "
> And twenty echoes twenty times cry so.
>
> She, marking them, begins a wailing note,
> And sings extemporally a woeful ditty ;
> Her love makes young men thrall, and old men dote ;
> How love is wise in folly, foolish-witty :
> Her heavy anthem still concludes in woe,
> And still the choir of echoes answers so.

No ear, of any nicety, I submit, can here lose the echoes of the Ophelia-Hamlet theme, and of " Romeo and Juliet " ; and further, as Mr. Looney has pointed out, on page lxxiii of his Introduction to Oxford's poems, we have also a most striking example of what he very justly describes as " identity of mental processes," between Oxford and Shakespeare, as follows.

> " In each case we have a female represented as pouring out her woes, and being answered by echoes from caves ; and in both cases the echoing is preceded by three identical conceptions in an identical order. First she beats her heart, next the caves are moved by pity, and then she breaks into song ; after which comes the echo."

The theory, then, that the introduction, by Shakespeare, of the boar-motive into " Venus and Adonis," is not accidental, but purposeful, becomes, in my judgment, undeniable, in view of the fact above demonstrated, that there is identity of mental process between the respective authors—if they were more than one—of Oxford's " Echo " song, of " Venus," and of one, at least, of the Shakesperean plays ; and I must here remind my readers that, at intervals throughout Shakespeare's

first acknowledged poem, the boar continues to be written of with peculiar emphasis, in such lines as (150) "she spied the hunted boar"; (151) "to rate the boar for murther"; and (172) "the foul boar's conquest on her fair delight"; the second of these three quotations, in particular, being a strange and unnatural phrase, as applied to an animal, and becoming apposite only when recognized as indicating a human being. Further, in stanzas 167, 168, which I here quote :—

"No, no," quoth she, "sweet Death, I did but jest;
Yet pardon me, I felt a kind of fear
When as I met the boar, that bloody beast,
Which knows no pity, but is still severe;
Then, gentle shadow,—truth I must confess—
I rail'd on thee, fearing my love's decease.

"'Tis not my fault: the boar provoked my tongue;
Be wreak'd on him, invisible commander;
'Tis he, foul creature, that hath done thee wrong;
I did but act, he's author of thy slander:
Grief hath two tongues; and never woman yet
Could rule them both without ten women's wit."

Both verses are very remarkable; for it will be observed that the goddess here dialogues with a living personification of death, concerning the boar, in a manner which, having regard to the inveterately underground methods of Elizabethan poetry, is, again, intelligible only on the assumption that an individual is here directly aimed at. That this individual is Oxford, seems to me to be almost certain: nor should I be in the least surprised to know that the lines quoted above—

the boar provoked my tongue
Be wreak'd on him, *invisible commander;*[1]
'Tis he, foul creature, that hath done thee wrong;
I did but act, he's *author of thy slander*—

[1] *Cf.* the probable "command" given to Oxford as head of the secret committee that was producing the Shakesperean plays. See post pp. 206–216.

are a direct, though secret, reference to events in Oxford's own life, in which the queen herself, probably, played some part. Profoundly significant also are the italicized words concerning secret "authorship" and "invisible command," especially when they are linked with the further probabilities, and certainties, which the later pages of this book will, little by little, disclose. Worthy of notice also is the closing couplet of stanza 169, where Venus, still speaking with Death,

> Tells him of trophies, statues, tombs and stories
> His victories, his triumphs and his glories—

in precisely the same way that, as we shall see in Chapter VI, the author of the sonnets there shews Oxford's mind to be ranging back, as it so often did, to the historic deeds, legendary and actual, of his great ancestors: to their victories, triumphs, and glories, and to the statued tombs beneath which—Death, as here in the sonnet, having won his victory over them at last—their dust lay, and still lies, mouldering among the ancient stones of Castle Hedingham, and Earl's Colne.[1] The closing stanza of 170 :—

> For he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
> And, beauty dead, black chaos comes again—

continues the same motive, which is once more, and far more beautifully, developed and expanded in sonnets 98–100, all of which, as will be seen, harp upon the family history, and glorious memories, of the ancestors from whom he derived.

> When in the chronicle of wasted time
> I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
> And beauty making beautiful old rhyme,
> In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights. . . .[2]

Those sonnets, as we shall see, have direct reference not only to the boar, but also to the mullet, or star, both of which symbols the Earl sees, in imagination, upon his

[1] See post p. 184. [2] Sonnet, 99/106.

coat-of-arms. Here let me quote stanzas 170–172, which are full of support for the Oxford case.

"O Jove," quoth she, "how much a fool was I
To be of such a weak and silly mind
To wail his death who lives and must not die
Till mutual overthrow of mortal kind!
For he being dead, with him is beauty slain,
And beauty dead, black chaos comes again.

"Fie, fie, fond love, thou art so full of fear
As one with treasure laden, hemm'd with thieves;
Trifles unwitnessed with eye or ear
Thy coward heart with false bethinking grieves."
Even at this word she hears a merry horn,
Whereat she leaps that was but late forlorn.

As falcons to the lure, away she flies;
The grass stoops not, she treads on it so light;
And in her haste unfortunately spies
The foul *boar's* conquest on her fair delight;
Which seen her eyes, as murder'd with the view,
Like *stars* ashamed of day, themselves withdrew.

Now one glance at the last of these stanzas shews, at once, the boar and the star motives of the Oxford coat-of-arms brought together, almost immediately upon the heels of lines that remind us, by implication, of the Earl's ancestral memories. But there is visible here a connection more direct than that; for if the reader will familiarize himself with the wording, and spirit, of those stanzas, and then compare them with Oxford's well-known poem, "Woman's Changeableness,"—which, as Mr. Looney has pointed out, is comparable also with lines from several Shakesperean plays, including "Taming of the Shrew," "Othello" and "Much Ado,"—he will see that they present a quite typically Shakesperean twisting of Oxford's words, into a similar kind of lyrical verse, in which, however, a woman is made to speak of a man, instead of, as in Oxford's lines, a man (Oxford)

of a woman. The general parallel every reader will be able to detect for himself; but I will set down for him some of the more direct verbal resemblances.

| OXFORD. | SHAKESPEARE. |
|---|---|
| O what a fool was I | How much a fool was I (*V. & A.*, 170.) |
| If their (women's) love was firm not fickle<br>How frail these creatures are | To be of such a weak and silly mind. (*V. & A.*, 170.)<br>Frailty, thy name is woman! (*Hamlet.*) |
| Unsettled still like haggards wild they range<br>These gentle birds they fly from man to man<br>And train them to our lure | O! for a falconer's voice, to lure this tassel-gentle back again. (*Juliet*, II, 2.)<br>As falcon to the lure. (*V. & A.*, 172) |

These parallel passages are full of identical motives—first the "fool" motive, in both instances relative to the other sex; then the weakmindedness and "frailty" of woman; then the "falconry" motive, used, in both cases, in connection with sex; and the "flight" motive corresponding; then woman's gentleness, in "these gentle birds that fly from man," matched with their lightness, physical and sexual—"the grass stoops not, she treads on it so light"[1]—and, lastly, the "lure" motive again;—a sequence of which the general effect upon my mind is a strong impression that those three stanzas were written with Oxford's poem, as also Oxford's coat-of-arms, strongly in the writer's memory and imagination.

The whole matter of these concealed allusions is, I need hardly say, extremely difficult and complex; and, in its nature, incapable of absolutely positive proof; but, for my own part, I feel confident that "Venus and Adonis," in common, perhaps, with certain passages of the earlier plays, and, certainly, of the sonnets, is, at bottom, a lyrically symbolical, and, of course, adapted

[1] *Cf.* "Romeo and Juliet." "O so light a fort will ne'er wear out the everlasting flint" (II, 6).

narration of vital experiences in Oxford's own life. The Earl, it seems, was dangerously attractive to many women, to comparatively few of whom he was equally and correspondingly drawn; a case in point being that of Anne Vavasour, of whom he wrote, in the song upon which I commented in a previous chapter: and my interpretation of "Venus and Adonis" is, that the poem, in part, presents, in a veiled manner, the relationship that existed, for a while, between Queen Elizabeth and Oxford, of whom a contemporary wrote that "The Queen's Majesty delighteth more in his dauncing and valiantness than any other." We have already seen, and shall see again, the "Importune-Me-No-More" motive of a song by Oxford, once ascribed to Queen Elizabeth herself, imported into "Two Gentlemen of Verona"; and, there closely linked with Sylvia, who, as I shall shew, had, most probably, Queen Elizabeth herself for a historic original: and it may well be, therefore, that Oxford, in "Venus," is using, for the first time, a theme of royal infatuation that would, very naturally, impress itself deeply upon him. I think it further possible that, granted the Earl's fecund and exuberant imagination, we have here one origin of those visions of the Earl become King, upon which we have seen Sidney, for one, exercising his wit. In that case, the boar, of "Venus," would be just another complex presentation of Oxford's self, comparable with his double self-presentation in several plays, such as "As You Like It," wherein he is Touchstone and Jacques,[1] and "Merry Wives," where he is both Fenton and Ford.[2]

Three consecutive stanzas, 185–187, provide further striking references to the boar:—

> But this foul, grim, and urchin-snouted boar,
> Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave,
>
> thus was Adonis slain;
> He ran upon the boar with his sharp spear

[1] See post pp. 257–259. [2] See post pp. 251–253.

Had I been tooth'd like him I must confess
With kissing him I should have kill'd him first—

the last of these being specially noticeable, because it reveals a certain veiled sympathy of Venus herself—and, through her, of her creator, the poet—for "the boar" who, unwittingly, slew her Adonis with a kiss;—as, one suspects, Oxford, symbolically, may be said to have done with other ladies, besides Anne Vavasour.

Here I notice another connection of ideas—already detected, it may be, by other readers of "Venus"—namely that hereabouts, from stanza 184 to the end of the poem, its author's thoughts seem to be running, beneath the surface of the text, upon two other themes—first, the one so frequently sung of by Oxford himself, in the very poems that we have lately been considering—I refer to the miseries attendant upon human affections—and, secondly, the spirit of the fairy comedy wherein twisting the same idea into lyrically fantastic humours, Shakespeare, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream," sports with the cross-purposes of love.

Taking first the Oxford theme; the description of

this foul, grim and urchin-snouted boar,
Whose downward eye still looketh for a grave—

at once recalls a phase of Oxford's own sometimes morbid mentality, whose downward, death-seeking glance found expression in the two poems, "Were I a King," and "Sidney's Answer," quoted on pages 38 and 39 of Mr. Looney's book; of which the closing couplet of the first-named runs:—

A doubtful choice of these things which to crave,
A kingdom, or a cottage, or a grave.

The stanzas of "Venus," that follow, from 190 onwards, continue the exact theme of Oxford's love-poems, of the time of the crisis, 1576, and the years immediately following; Shakespeare's line—

Sorrow on love hereafter shall attend—

which epitomizes the matter—matching Oxford's, in "Love and Wit"—

For love is worse than hate.

As for the twisting of his love-theme, into wit and playful fantasy, such as Shakespeare—borrowing, it seems, dialogue, as well as ideas, from Oxford's poems of the same period, "The Forsaken Man"—did also in "The Dream"; many reminders of that comedy, supplementing those already noticed, in earlier pages of this chapter, come chiming, hereabouts, through the lines of "Venus and Adonis"; for, just as the winged birds of the forest, to lovely Adonis,

Would bring him mulberries, and ripe red cherries,
He fed them with sight, they him with berries—

so, at Titania's bidding, the winged fairies of the Athenian forest wait upon ass-headed Bottom (*M.N.D.*, III, 1),

Hop in his walks and gambol in his eyes;
Feed him with apricocks and dewberries,
With purple grapes, green figs, and mulberries.

Stanza 191, moreover, is, in effect, an epitome of the plot of "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

(Love) shall be fickle, false, and full of fraud,
Bud, and be blasted, in a breathing while;
The bottom poison, and the top e'erstraw'd
With sweets that shall the truest sight beguile—

the last line being markedly reminiscent of (*M.N.D.*, II, 1)

When I a fat and bean-fed horse beguile—

words taken from a speech anent the "merry hours" that a tricksy spirit can derive from the cross-purposes and disasters of four mortals, in, and out of, love. It is, perhaps, worth noting, that the last line but one, of the above-quoted passage, holds Bottom's name close-linked with motives of the Dream play; and that the first line:—

(Love) shall be fickle, false, and full of fraud—

parallels, both in metre, rhythm, sense, and alliteration of the Fs, Oxford's line in "Woman's Changeableness"—

Or that their love were firm not fickle still.

The 194th and 195th stanzas also contain themes wholly suggestive, not of lines merely, but of whole scenes from "The Dream." No. 194 runs:—

It shall be cause of war and dire events,
And set dissensions 'twixt the son and sire;
Subject and servile to all discontents,
As dry combustious matter is to fire;
Sith in his prime death doth my love destroy
They that love best their loves shall not enjoy.

And the corresponding passage in "The Dream" (II, 1) is spoken, not, this time, by Puck, but, in Puck's presence, by Titania:—

The seasons alter; hoary-headed frosts
Fall in the fresh lap of the crimson rose,
And on old Hiem's thin and icy crown
An odorous chaplet of sweet summer buds
Is, as in mockery, set: the spring, the summer,
The chiding autumn, angry winter change
Their wonted liveries, and the mazed world,
By their increase, now knows not which is which:
And this same progeny of evil comes
From our debate, from our dissension;
We are their parents and original.

The parallels here, whether you consider vocabulary or motive, could hardly be closer, as a glance at them, side by side, will shew.

| VENUS AND ADONIS. | MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM. |
|---|---|
| It shall be cause of war and dire events | *Cf.* all Titania's catalogue of disasters (*M.N.D.*, II, 1.) |
| And set *dissension* 'twixt the *son and sire* | For this same progeny of evil comes<br>From our debate, from our *dissension*<br>We are their *parents and originals* |

Stanza 195, which runs thus :—

> By this the boy that by her side lay kill'd
> Was melted like a vapour from her sight,
> And in his blood, that on the ground lay spill'd,
> A *purple flower* sprung up, chequer'd with white,
> Resembling well his pale cheeks and the blood
> Which in round drops upon their whiteness stood

is no less closely paraphrased, by Oberon, in the equally familiar lines, from the same scene :—

> Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell.
> It fell upon a little *western flower*,
> Before milk-white, *now purple* with love's wound,
> And maidens call it love-in-idleness—

words which, I think, twist adroitly, to a new purpose, not only "the boy (Adonis-Cupid) that by her side lay kill'd," but also, more closely still, the purple flower chequered with white, like a blossom blood-stained; while the boy who, in the "Venus" poem, "melted like a vapour from her sight," is, in the play, transformed into the boy Cupid's shaft, which Oberon, earlier in the same speech, had seen,

> Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon.

Looking back again, over these passages, there is observable another, and highly significant, analogy with what has gone before; for it may, or may not, have occurred already to some of my readers, that just as we have been suggesting that the Venus of the poem was, historically, Queen Elizabeth, so also these speeches, of the play that we have been citing as parallels, are spoken by, or to Titania, whom Miss Rickert identified [1] as being also a name for Shakespeare's English queen—the very queen who, by common consent, is directly alluded to in Oberon's immediately preceding lines :—

> That very time I saw, but thou could'st not,
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth,

[1] Political Propaganda and Satire in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Edith Rickert, "Modern Philology," November, 1923.

Cupid all arm'd a certain aim he took
At a fair vestal throned by the west,
And loosed his love-shaft smartly from his bow,
As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
And the imperial votaress passed on,
In maiden meditation, fancy free.[1]

What could be more significant? And if a reader should here be asking, as he very pertinently may, what all this, and the preceding passages, have got to do with the theory of Oxford's identity with Shakespeare, I answer, that it is my intention, by guiding him, as best I can, through these parallels, and inter-weavings, of personality, thought, word, picture, and metaphor, to shew the impossibility of severing the mind, and personality, of Oxford from any of the writings that I have been considering, or shall consider, in chapters to come. Whether you take songs, poems, sonnets, or plays, the same mentality, occupied by the same teeming fancies, is visible, alike, through all; the only differences being such as must necessarily arise within a still growing brain, at work upon a maturing style; while the young and ardent poet, through all these varied media of lyrical-dramatic self-expression, continues to reshape, towards, and, at last, into, perfection, the same ever-recurring images and ideas.

Turning now to the closing stanzas of "Venus and Adonis," it seems probable to me that the goddess, bowing her head, "this new sprung flower to smell," may have given to Shakespeare his root-idea for the flower-motive of the Dream; a theory confirmed by the lines the follow:—

She crops the stalk, and in the breach appears
Green-dropping sap, which she compares to tears—

[1] It is noteworthy that Raleigh, in 1592, had addressed Elizabeth as Diana and Venus in person. A play of Dekker's openly states in introduction that its character, Titania, is Queen Elizabeth.

a couplet which supplies not only the "plucking" idea, used also in the play; but also the squeezing, into human eyes, of the sap, which, it will be noticed, "she compares to tears." The next stanza (197) contains words:—

"Poor flower," quoth she, "this was thy father's guise—
Sweet issue of a more sweet-smelling sire—
For every little grief to wet his eyes":

that, in another form, are used, I think, by Titania (III, 1)

And when she weeps, weeps every little flower.

Of the following lines also, from 198, Shakespeare, I feel certain, made use:—

Lo, in this hollow cradle take thy rest;
My throbbing heart shall rock thee day and night:
There shall not be one minute in an hour
Wherein I will not kiss thy sweet love's flower.—

for I believe them to have been the origin of that episode in which Titania, herself under the flower-spell, rocks the ass-head in her arms (*M.N.D.*, IV, 1), murmuring the while:—

Sleep thou, and I will wind thee in my arms,
Fairies, be gone, and be all ways away. (*Exeunt fairies.*)
So doth the woodbine the sweet honeysuckle
Gently entwist; the female ivy so
Enrings the barky fingers of the elm.
O, how I love thee! how I dote on thee! (*they sleep*)—

this being by no means the first time that Shakespeare-Oxford, the mature, has made sport with his immature self. Even to the very end of the poem, the parallels hold; for that last, beautiful stanza of "Venus":—

Thus weary of the world, away she hies,
And yokes her silver doves; by whose swift aid
Their mistress, mounted, through the empty skies
In her light chariot quickly is convey'd;
Holding their course to Paphos, where their queen
Means to immure herself and not be seen—

I hear echoed in Puck's yet lovelier lines :—

> And we fairies, that do run
> By the triple Hecate's team,
> From the presence of the sun,
> Following darkness like a dream ;

with their identical motive of the immortal's chariot, in quest of invisibility, seeking the shadows of night. Nor need I remind the keener sighted of my readers, that, here again, repeating, almost, the cryptic reference, in stanza 168, to the " boar," as an " invisible commander," you have the closing line of the poem, as though by way of signature, referring—wholly, as we shall see, in the manner of the sonnets, and of the plays—to some mysterious being, who, like Venus-Titania, cloaked in the darkness of night,

> Means to immure himself and not be seen.

Briefly to recapitulate this chapter, we have observed that, in constructing the main fabric of " A Midsummer Night's Dream," Shakespeare, almost certainly, had " Titus Andronicus " in mind ; that the clown characters of " Love's Labour's Lost " formed, in part, the originals for Bottom, and his companions ; and that Oxford's poem, " The Forsaken Man " burlesqued, seems to have contributed something towards the Pyramus and Thisbe dialogue : but our brief review of " Venus and Adonis " has also shewn, conclusively, I hope, that motive after motive, especially for the fairy scenes of " The Dream," was lifted, sometimes in almost identical words, from Shakespeare's early poem, and, occasionally, from other poems of Oxford's youth, particularly " Woman's Changeableness." I have, I hope, fully justified also the probability that the verses of " Venus," in which Oxford looks back upon the lives and deeds of his ancestors—especially as symbolized in the boar, horse, and man episode, in statued tombs, and the family coat-of-arms—were, later, refashioned by him, into some of

the loveliest, as well as the most significant, of the sonnets.

One other important piece of evidence, in connection with "Venus and Adonis," remains yet briefly to be considered: and that is the question of possible Baconian authorship.

Orthodox Stratfordians, of the academic schools, unanimously, almost, and with astonishing obstinacy, deny, absolutely, the existence of any connection whatever between Bacon, and the Shakesperean poems and plays: yet the evidence is, manifestly, against them; and, to an impartial mind, there can, I think, be no doubt whatever that Bacon was allied, in some close, though secret, manner, with the whole of Shakespeare's works. It is undeniable that, as we shall see later on,[1] he wrote many cipher-signatures into the dedicatory page of Shakespeare's sonnets; and an examination of the "Satires" of Shakespeare's contemporaries, Marston and Hall,[2] with their mysterious references to one "Labeo," makes it probable that both those writers, by "Labeo," meant Bacon; and, it seems, honestly believed Bacon to be the author of "Venus and Adonis," of "Love's Labour's Lost," and, possibly, of the other Shakesperean plays as well. Much of the evidence for such an assumption, by these two satirists, is very plausible, since the boar does appear in Bacon's crest; and Marston's line, addressed to Hall,

What, not *mediocra firma* from thy spite!

does contain, in the italicized Latin words, a direct mention of Bacon's family motto: and, strongest of all, as Mr. Bertram G. Theobald has pointed out, in "Shakespeare's Sonnets Unmasked," "Labeo" is actually a triple Baconian signature, spelling the word "Bacon," in three different, though quite simple, ciphers, namely in the simplest of all A = 1, B = 2, etc.; in the reverse cipher, Z = 1, Y = 2 etc.; and, lastly in a

[1] Post pp. 147–149. [2] 1598 and 1597.

third cipher, only a little more complex than the other two in design. Such a sequence of coincidences cannot, possibly, be accidental; and it follows, therefore, that Marston and Hall seem, honestly, to have believed Bacon to be the concealed author of "Venus and Adonis"; and, presumably, possessed, themselves, some inkling into Bacon's methods of signing by cipher. Certainly, in this matter, some sort of *prima-facie* case for Bacon can be made out; though it breaks down, I think, upon a general review of the whole case, which, inseparably and unanswerably, connects Oxford, rather than Verulam, with the authorship, as opposed to the editorship, of the Shakesperean works, as a whole.

Considerations of space prevent me from dealing, so fully as I should like, with the whole of this difficult and complex "Labeo" question; but I would point out that there is almost nothing, in Marston and Hall's references, including those to the "boar," which cannot be applied, at least, as easily to Oxford, as to Verulam; such, for example, as Hall's reference, in the "Byting Satires" (first Satire of Book IV) to the "crafty Cuttle,"[1] who

> lieth sure
> In the blacke cloud of his thicke vomiture,
> Who but complains of wronged faith or fame,
> When he may shift it to another's name—

all of which not merely repeats exactly the "blacke cloud" of mystery-motive, upon which, as we have seen, Shakespeare closed the last stanza of "Venus," but also refers openly to the complaints of "wronged faith or fame," which echo, unendingly, through both the admittedly Oxfordian poems, and the Shakesperean poems and plays.

Another "Labeo" reference, that applies much better to Oxford than to Bacon, is Marston's line:—

> Most most of me belov'd! whose silent name
> One letter bounds—

[1] i.e. cuttle-fish.

since Oxford's "silent name," to which the poem, that we have been considering, makes so many references, is, actually, bounded by one letter E, which begins and ends Edward de Vere; whereas the Baconians, to support their theory, are forced to argue that the reference is to the long name-embracing, capital F, at the beginning of the first edition of "Lucrece," which is printed somewhat in this fashion $F^{R}_{B}$, and which, I am inclined to think, may rightly be taken as a sign of Baconian participation, in some editorial capacity, in the poem which we have next to consider.

From "Venus and Adonis," then, let us pass, for a moment, to these other "untutored lines" of Shakespeare, known as "The Rape of Lucrece."

The poem is hardly of first-rate importance to our subject; nor do I suppose that its author cared greatly for it, or very willingly used it, as a wide quarrying ground for the plays; but it has, nevertheless, some vital points of connection with our theme, which must on no account be overlooked.

The first noticeably interesting feature of the poem is, that the Lucrece motive links itself, at once, with the ages-old Hamlet saga, which, as I shewed in my last book,[1] flowered, during the mid-sixteenth century, into those powerful Elizabethan dramas of revenge, of which Hamlet is the culminating achievement; for, as those of my readers, who are versed in Roman history, may remember, when Tarquin the proud, the villain of Shakespeare's poem, had slain the father, and the eldest brother, of Lucius Junius Brutus—and, by outraging Lucretia, had caused the girl to seek refuge from her shames in death—the man who snatched the dagger from the wound, and swore, upon the reeking blade, everlasting hatred to the House of Tarquin, was none other than that Lucius Junius himself, who, by feigning madness, deceived his enemy, saved his own

[1] "Shakespeare and Chapman," cap. IV. The historic originals of Shakespeare's "Hamlet."

life, and earned for himself the now historic surname, Brutus.

But that same Brutus, whose name is so intimately connected with the hero of a great Roman tragedy by Shakespeare, is himself the Roman representative of that world-wide story, whose central figure, as I have shewn elsewhere,[1] was called Orestes in the Hellenic saga, Amlodi in the Scandinavian middle-ages, and, in Elizabethan days, Hamlet, whose contemporary historic original was none other than Oxford himself. In "The Rape of Lucrece," therefore, as I conceive the poem, we have simply Oxford-Shakespeare portraying, in lyrical dramatic form, the worser half of his often passionate, and, occasionally, lawless self, in the person of Tarquin; thus foreshadowing, if one may so phrase it, the worthier and nobler side of that same universal personality, containing, as Strindberg's did, "multitudes within itself," and filled with almost limitless potentialities, whether for good or for evil. Such a surmise is borne out by several interesting little hints scattered through the poem, and pointing to Oxford personally, and, occasionally, to the Hamlet play; the first that I have noted being in stanza 29 :—

> O shame to knighthood and to shining arms!
> O foul dishonour to my household's grave!
> O impious act including all foul harms!
> A martial man to be soft fancy's slave!
> True valour still a true respect should have;
> Then my digression is so vile, so base,
> That it will live engraven in my face—

which may well be a typically Oxfordian reference to his pride of birth, as also to his constant desire, especially in early years, to acquire martial renown. Equally characteristic is the opening couplet of the 30th stanza :—

> Yes, though I die, the scandal will survive,
> And be an eyesore in my golden coat—

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 59–62.

the word scandal echoing, just as do Oxford's poems, and Shakespeare's plays, the Earl's never-ending concern with his exalted, yet deeply wounded name, and some mysterious, ever present secret shame that sullies the shining glory of his golden coat.

Stanza 59 also is interesting, as giving us, apparently, a root from which grew, in part, one of Shakespeare's sweetest flowers of song, "Hark, hark the lark!" in "Cymbeline." This is the verse.

> Without the bed her other fair hand was,
> On the green coverlet; whose perfect white
> Show'd like an April daisy on the grass,
> With pearly sweat resembling dew of night.
> Her eyes, like marigolds, had sheath'd their light,
> And canopied in darkness sweetly lay,
> Till they might open to adorn the day.
> Her hair, like golden threads, play'd with her breath.

Here, with "marigolds" for "Mary-buds," and the word "golden" applied to hair, instead of to eyes, you have the pearly sweat, upon the white hand of Lucrece, transformed into the dew, "on chaliced flowers that lies"; both poems, equally, holding the motives of women's beauty seen in the light of fragrant flowers, and of dewy dawns. The closing couplet of stanza 59, concerning ambition-fired Tarquin,

> Who, like a foul usurper went about
> From this fair throne to heave the owner out,

is an interesting example of a Hamlet-motive linking itself, by a natural sequence of ideas, with the story of Roman Lucrece. Stanza 72, on the other hand, seems rather to foretell the compunctious ambitions of Macbeth:—

> I have debated even in my soul,
> What wrong, what shame, what sorrow I shall breed;
> But nothing can Affection's course control
> Or stop the headlong fury of his speed.
> I know repentant tears ensue the deed,
> Reproach, disdain, and deadly enmity;
> Yet strive I to embrace mine infamy—

a surmise borne out by the fact that Macbeth, in the dagger-speech (II, 1), imagines

> the wolf,
> Whose howl's his watch, thus with his stealthy pace,
> With Tarquin's ravishing strides, toward his design
> Moves like a ghost—

and there may be a touch of significance in the closing couplet of 75, which tells how

> the author of their obloquy
> Shalt have thy trespass cited up in rhymes,
> And sung by children in succeeding times.

Stanza 96 contains what seems to be another foretelling of an incident in Macbeth ;—

> I mean to bear thee (Lucretia's body)
> Unto the base bed of some rascal groom,
> To be thy partner in this shameful doom—

because the groom-incidents, in the murder of Duncan (I, 7),—

> when in swinish sleep
> Their drenched natures lie as in a death
>
> His spongy officers, who shall bear the guilt
> Of our great quell ?—

and so forth, immediately precede, and follow, the dagger-speech, in the writing of which, as we have just seen, Shakespeare had in mind the Tarquin story, and, doubtless, his own poem of " Lucrece."

With the 109th, and following stanzas, in which Lucrece

> breathes . . . forth her spirit
> Against the unseen secrecy of night,

we come upon another of those curious passages of crudely written alliterative verse, of which, as we have seen before, the mature poet—merciless, on occasion, towards his own early writings, as he could be also, I opine, towards his hot-headed youthful escapades—was

always ready to make game. From these lines, as I believe,—

> O comfort-killing night, image of hell!
> Dim register and notary of shame!
> Black stage for tragedies and murders fell! . . .
> Grim cave of death. . . .
>
> O hateful, vaporous, and foggy night,
> Since thou art guilty of my cureless crime,
> Muster thy mists to meet the eastern light, . . .
>
> O night thou furnace of foul-reeking smoke,
> Let not the jealous day behold that face
> Which underneath thy black all-hiding cloak
> Immodestly lies martyr'd. . . .

with their triple invocation to night, may, very possibly, supply the origin of the similarly triple apostrophe, spoken by Pyramus, as he draws near the wall:—

> O grim-look'd night! O night with hue so black!
> O night, which ever art when day is not!
> O night, O night! alack, alack, alack;

Shakespeare having here parodied "Lucrece," just as we saw him, in a previous chapter, and for the same scene of "The Dream," travesting Oxford's song, "The Forsaken Man." It may be also that the same lines, by antithesis, furnished a hint for Juliet's lyrical outburst, in Capulet's orchard (*R. & J.*, III, 2):—

> Come, civil night,
> Thou sober-suited matron all in black,

which is very near to the line from Lucrece quoted above, and ending "underneath thy black all-hiding cloak." In this connection it is noteworthy that only a few stanzas further on (118) we find Shakespeare echoing, once more, the central thought of Oxford's poem, "Loss of Good Name," which, in Mr. Looney's edition, is separated by two songs only from "The Forsaken Man," to the

possible parodying of which I have just referred. Here is the couplet from Lucrece :—

> Let my good name, that senseless reputation,
> For Collatine's dear love be kept unspotted,

concerning which I may remark that, quite certainly, Shakespeare no more than Oxford, at bottom, held good reputation to be senseless :—*vide* Cassio, in "Othello," II, 3,

> Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

In a later chapter [1] I shall argue that Othello himself is probably, though in part only, a remorseful expression of Oxford's relationship with his first wife, Anne Cecil.

There remain only a few lines, upon which to comment. This one, from stanza 138 :—

> To make him curse this cursed crimeful night—

is suspiciously close to Quince's words, in the prologue,

> Whereat with blade, with bloody, blameful blade ;

and another, which opens stanza 155—

> Revealing day through every cranny spies—

is memorable, as being one of those phrases written upon that tantalizing document known as The Northumberland MS., in the form,

> Revealing day through every cranny creeps.

Stanza 229 opens ;—

> Three times with sighs she gives her sorrow fire—

wording that is remarkably close to the lines addressed to Anne Vavasour in de Vere's Echo song,—

> Three times with her soft hand, full hard on her left side she knocks,
> And sigh'd so sore as might have moved some pity in the rocks ;

[1] See post pp. 321–323.

and used, apparently, in the scene between Polonius and Ophelia (*Ham.*, II, 1);—

> OPH. He took me by the wrist and held me hard;
>
> And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
> He raised a sigh so piteous and profound. . . .

thus affording, I think, another instance of ideas from an Oxford's poem passing into one of Shakespeare's early poems, and thence, it would seem, into the Hamlet play.

Further, in stanzas 258 and 259

> Brutus who pluck'd the knife from Lucrece' side,
> Seeing such emulation in their woe,
> Began to clothe his wit in state and pride,
> Burying in Lucrece' wound his folly's show.
> He with the Romans was esteemed so
> As silly jeering idiots are with kings,
> For sportive words, and uttering foolish things.
>
> But now he throws that shallow habit by,
> Wherein deep policy did him disguise;
> And arm'd his long-hid wits advisedly,
> To check the tears in Collatinus' eyes.
> "Thou wronged lord of Rome," quoth he, "arise;
> Let my unsounded self, suppos'd a fool,
> Now set thy long-experienced wit to school,"

we have the versified development of the Hamlet motive, to which I have already called attention; these stanzas giving us, not merely an epitome, almost, of the Hamlet play; but also, in the couplet—

> As silly jeering idiots are with kings,
> For sportive words and uttering foolish things,

a forecast of that "tedious old fool," Polonius, with his inane jocosities, that so angered the prince; and, very possibly, a concealed jibe at the historic original of Polonius, Burleigh.

Finally, I will refer such of my readers as may care to investigate further than I have done, this somewhat complex matter, of the connection between de Vere's poems and "The Rape of Lucrece," to pages 176–77 and pages 188–90 of Mr. Looney's "Shakespeare Identified," wherein he sets out a further striking series of verbal, and stylistic, conformities between Oxford's and Shakespeare's Poems.

## CHAPTER V

## ALLUSIONS TO SHAKESPEARE AND OXFORD IN CHAPMAN'S POEMS

CHAPMAN'S almost innumerable secret comments upon, and criticisms, of Shakespeare, in the "Bussy" and "Biron" plays, I have made clear, I hope, in Chapters V–VIII of my "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists." These dramas were Chapman's later work, and shew, conclusively, that his mind, when writing them, was soaked, not only in the plots and scenes, but also in the dialogue and phraseology of the Shakesperean plays; and my investigation of them constitutes a new discovery, in the secret literary relationships between the rival poets.[1] It has, however, been recognized, by Shakesperean scholars, for many years past, that Chapman's early poems, "The Shadow of Night," "Ovid's Banquet of Sense," and so forth, were certainly written in emulation of Shakespeare's early poems, "Venus and Adonis," and "Lucrece"; though no scholar, hitherto, excepting, to some extent, Mr. Arthur Acheson[2] and Mr. J. M. Robertson,[3] has, so far as I know, attempted, as yet, to deal, at all comprehensively, with what Swinburne, in his Introduction to "The Minor Poems and Translations of Chapman,"

[1] My conclusions have been derided by certain critics, who, however, in most instances, have prudently refrained from adducing any supporting evidence or argument. Mere assertion does not easily let one in with an answer; but how the case against me can be made out by honest, open-minded, and intelligent persons, passes my comprehension. The task has never yet been seriously attempted.

[2] "Shakespeare and the Rival Poet."

[3] "Shakespeare and Chapman."

calls that " incessant by-play of incongruous digressions and impenetrable allusions," which, however, prove, upon examination, to be somewhat less cryptic than the great Victorian poet,—because himself unable to decipher them,—would have us suppose.

The first of these poems, " The Shadow of Night " (1593), was dedicated, by its author, to his friend, Matthew Royden, in a letter from which I quote the following abbreviated lines :—

> It is an exceeding rapture of delight in the deep search of knowledge . . . that maketh men manfully indure the extremes incident to that Herculean labour : from flints must the Gorgonean fount be smitten . . . before they can cut off the viperous head of benumbing ignorance, or subdue their monstrous affections to most beautiful judgment.
>
> How then may a man stay his marvailing to see passion-driven men, reading but to curtail a tedious hour, and altogether hidebound with affection to great men's fancies, taking upon them as killing censures as if they were judgment's butchers, or as if the life of truth lay tottering in their verdicts.
>
> Now what a supererogation in wit is this, to think Skill so mightily pierced with their loves, that she should prostitutely shew them her secrets, when she will scarcely be looked upon by others but with invocation, fasting, watching, yea, not without having drops of their souls like an heavenly familiar.

Now having regard to the fact that, as the next chapter will prove, the author of Shakespeare's sonnets—whom, I shall endeavour to shew, is Oxford himself—undoubtedly satirizes that last quoted line, concerning the " heavenly familiar," in sonnet 52/86—and that Shakespeare, by acknowledging that the cap fits, when writing of his own " rude ignorance," seems to admit that Chapman's phrase, " benumbing ignorance," is aimed at himself and that himself, consequently, was the passion-driven man whose reading was done but " to

curtail a tedious hour"—renders it a legitimate inference, that all these mystical allusions are to Oxford, whom Chapman must have known to be Shakespeare. In addition to the charge of ignorance, such phrases as "monstrous affections," "passion-driven men," "affection to great men's fancies," "killing censures," and desultory reading, rather than sound scholarship, are exactly the sort of reproaches that Oxford's enemies were constantly aiming at him; and a later expression, "the admirable lustre of their true nobility," may quite well have been intended to imply that Oxford's nobility was one of birth only, and by no means extended to the "soul" within.[1]

This "Hymnus in Noctem," then, the gloomy night worship of which Shakespeare is going to satirize in the sonnets, and, more pointedly still, in "Love's Labour's Lost," has a passage, beginning with its 81st line, which is, probably, an attack on Oxford:—

> Religious curb, that managed men in bounds,
> Of public welfare, loathing private grounds
> (Now cast away by self-love's paramours),
> Are all transform'd to Caledonian boars,
> That kill our bleeding vines, displough our fields,
> Rend groves in pieces; all things nature yields
> Supplanting: tumbling up in hills of dearth,
> The fruitful disposition of the earth.
> Ruin creates men; all to slaughter bent,
> Like envy, fed with other's famishment.
>
> And what makes men without the parts of men,
> Or in their manhoods less than children,
> But manless natures!

Here the references to irreligion, self-love, paramours, Caledonian boars [2] (the Oxford crest again), unnaturalness, slaughter, and, particularly, that last allusion to

[1] Compare in "A Coronet for His Mistress' Philosophy," also aimed at Shakespeare-Oxford: "Blood without soul, of false nobility."

[2] *Cf.* ante pp. 70–72, the boar in "Venus and Adonis."

" manless natures "—Oxford's " womanishness " being a stock gibe of Chapman's—are all of them weapons in the armoury of the Earl's enemies. This passage also seems to continue the same theme :—

> But woe is wretched me, without a name ;
> Virtue feeds scorn, and noblest honour shame :
> Pride bathes in tears of poor submission,
> And makes his soul the purple he puts on.
> Kneel then with me, fall worm-like on the ground
> And from the infectious dunghill of this round,
> From men's brass wits and golden foolery,
> Weep, weep your souls into felicity.
> Come to this house of mourning, serve the Night,
> To whom pale Day (with whoredom soaked quite)
> Is but a drudge, selling her beauty's use
> To rapes, adulteries, and to all abuse.

Here, I think, we have more references to Oxford-Shakespeare, Chapman contrasting himself, nameless and obscure, though virtuous, with the shame-feeding " noblest honour " of the Lord Great Chamberlain, who, by privilege of birth, can don that " purple " of rank, which, in Chapman's case, adorns only the soul ; while the " golden foolery," and the rapes and adulteries of Day, are again in the catalogue of abuses with which Oxford was commonly charged, and contain, I think, veiled references also to the manner and matter of the poems and plays, including " The Rape of Lucrece," written in the same year as " The Shadow of Night " (1593) ; though a still more interesting allusion, or imitation, which I seem here to detect, is one to " Richard II," a play that Malone, and other commentators, have ascribed also to 1593. Let the reader examine carefully these five lines :—

> Kneel then with me, fall worm-like on the ground,
> And from the infectious dunghill of this round,
> From men's brass wits and golden foolery,
> Weep, weep your souls into felicity—

let him then reread Richard II's speeches, in III, 2, of that

play, and see whether he cannot agree with me, that the origin of the above lines is to be found in those speeches, particularly,

For God's sake let us sit upon the ground

. . . . . I weep for joy
To stand upon my kingdom once again—

and in all the thoughts that hover, so long, and so lyrically, about the ideas of brief mortality encircled by the "golden round" of kingship. This passage, in my judgment, is another example—of which I gave so many in my last book—of Chapman borrowing words and ideas from, and paraphrasing into resonant obscurity, passages of Shakespeare, of which he was the more bitterly jealous, because, at bottom, he deeply admired them. I even believe the words, "golden foolery," to be a veiled gibe at these very speeches of Richard, which, from a hostile view-point, they not inaptly describe; and as for,

Weep, weep your souls into felicity—

does not that line picture, quite accurately, Richard's astonishing faculty, unmatched in all dramatic literature, for finding a quasi-happiness in his own flood of golden rhetoric.[1] The king's feministic intellectuality, moreover, fits in exactly with Chapman's gibe at "manless natures," that we were looking at a page or two back. When I further remind my readers, that, as I shewed, conclusively, in Chapter VIII, of "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," the author of "Byron's Tragedy" based the whole scheme of his play upon, and cribbed passage after passage, including the one under

[1] *Cf.* as well as Richard's lines above-quoted, these :—

No matter where; of comfort no man speak:
Let's talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs;
Make dust our paper and with rainy eyes
Write sorrow on the bosom of the earth,
Let's choose executors . . .

discussion, from this very play, "Richard II," the proof becomes complete. "Byron's Tragedy," it should be added, contains two direct references to the Earl of Essex; and, taking into account the generally admitted relation of the play to the Essex conspiracy, it seems indubitable to me that Chapman thought Essex to be, in part, the contemporary historic original of King Richard: but I think it more than probable that Chapman knew Oxford to be not merely the author of the play, but also, in part, its original character; for it may be taken as certain that Shakespeare, of necessity, infused much of himself into all these intellectually emotional, and feministic characters, of the Hamlet-Richard-Orsino types.

Highly significant, and peculiar, in these two hymns, is the reiterated dedication of Chapman's life, to the "black shades and desolation" of night, his devotion to that virtuous lady, Darkness, and his splenetic animadversions against the iniquities of Day, as expressed in lines already quoted, and in these :—

> And as when hosts of stars attend thy flight,
> Day of deep students, most contentful night . . .
>
> And haughty Day to the infernal deep,
> Proclaiming silence, study, ease, and sleep . . .
>
> To thy black shades and desolation
> I consecrate my life. . . .
>
> End your thrall,
> In these soft shades of sable funeral;
>
> And shameless Day, doth marble in us all.
>
> No pen can anything eternal write,
> That is not steep'd in humours of the Night.
>
> And welcome Night, ye noblest heirs of men,
> Hence Phœbus to thy glassy strumpet's bed.

Which grant for ever (O! eternal Night)
Till virtue flourish in the light of light.

I cannot help suspecting that Chapman, in these verses, was consciously identifying himself, and, perhaps, his socially obscure school of writers as well,—among whom would be his friend, Jonson,—with the courtier poets, such as Oxford pre-eminently was, who shone in the daylight-glory of Windsor and Whitehall—a surmise borne out, to some extent, I think, by these two couplets, from "Richard II," I, 3. The first is spoken by Mowbray, immediately after his sentence of banishment by Richard; and the second by Gaunt, also to the king:—

Then thus I turn me from my country's light,
To dwell in solemn shades of endless night.

My oil-dried lamp and time-bewasted light
Shall be extinct with age and endless night.

Both these couplets express strongly the Shakesperean, as against the Chapmanian, conception of darkness. While we are considering the personal relationships of these two men, is it not significant to observe that Shakespeare himself seems to take up these challenges, not only, as the next chapter will reveal, in the "rival poet" sonnets,[1] but also in IV, 3 of "Love's Labour's Lost," to which I shall now refer, instead of reserving them for my chapter on Oxfordian allusions in the Shakesperean comedies.

With the opening of the second act of "Love's Labour's Lost," Shakespeare's attacks on Chapman begin; if, as I suppose, the couplet, spoken by the Princess to Boyet:—

Beauty is bought by judgment of the eye,
Not utter'd by base sale of chapmen's tongues—

is a repetition of the attack upon his rival's mercenary motives in sonnet 22:—

[1] See post pp. 167–172.

Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
I will not praise that purpose not to sell—

accompanied by a deliberately added pun upon Chapman's name.[1] As a result, in part, of facts that have come to light in the life of the Stratford actor, Shakespeare has been often accused of cupidity; but here, bearing out Mere's hint, that the sonnets were written for circulation among his private friends, we have Shakespeare twice affirming, against his rival, the same idea; that he lays himself open to suspicion of mercenary motive, who praises too loudly his own wares in the market-place; unless he be there without purpose to sell—an idea reiterated, for a third time, in the speech I am now passing on to (IV, 3), wherein Biron, who, unquestionably, stands for Shakespeare himself, exclaims—

Fie, painted rhetoric! O, she needs it not.
To things of sale a seller's praise belongs—

words that paraphrase exactly the sale-motive of the two earlier couplets, and rebuke Chapman's ineradicable tendency to blow lustily through his own trumpet. For convenience of reference, I quote here a part of this interesting scene, wherein, as I read it, Shakespeare-Oxford, while using expressions that directly recall, and, perhaps, refer to, the original of the dark-lady of the sonnets, seems to champion, through Biron's mouth, a school of day—

O, tis the sun that maketh all things shine—

[1] Mr. J. M. Robertson argues, in "Shakespeare and Chapman," p. 104, that Mr. Acheson is not on "solid ground" in supposing this to be an imputation, by Shakespeare, of mercenary motives to Chapman; advancing as a reason, that both "Venus" and "Lucrece" were written for the market, to say nothing of the plays. Mr. Robertson also refuses Mr. Acheson's suggestion that "chapmen's tongues" is a punning attack on the poet, on the ground that "it would have exceeded in wanton rudeness even the large licence of the Elizabethan stage." But he does not observe that the two passages quoted above support one another.

whereas the king, with,

O paradox! Black is the badge of hell,
The hue of dungeons and the school of night—

espouses the cause of Chapman. It should be added that the date of this poem, 1593, fits closely in with the period to which both "Richard II" and "Love's Labour's Lost," in addition to the early sonnets, are generally ascribed; while the use of Biron's name, as representing Shakespeare himself, in the last-mentioned comedy, again fits in with the theory, already put forward, that Chapman, imitating scenes from "Richard II," when writing his own "Biron" play, also had Shakespeare personally in mind.

The "Hymnus in Cynthiam" which, with the "Hymnus in Noctem," completes "The Shadow of Night," is no less interesting, nor less pertinent to our subject, than its predecessor; because an examination of it made me at once suspect that parts of the poem were cribbed from Shakespeare—in this instance from "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; the passages to catch my eye being these:—

(Hecate) where in her heavenly magic mood she stalks,
Her arbours, thickets. . . .

The juice more clear than day, yet shadows night,
Where humour challengeth no drop of right;
But judgment shall display, to purest eyes
With ease, the bowels of these mysteries.

See then this planet of our lives descended
To rich Ortygia, gloriously attended,
Not with her fifty ocean nymphs, nor yet
Her twenty foresters: but doth beget
By powerful charms, delightsome servitors
Of flowers and shadows, mists and meteors:
Her rare Elysian palace she did build
With studied wishes, which sweet hope did gild
With sunny foil,[1] that lasted but a day.
For night must needs importune her away

[1] (?) toil.

> But make that blissful court of hers to shine
> With all accomplishment of architect. . . .
>
> This tender building, *Pax Imperii* named,
> Which cast a shadow like a Pyramis,
> Whose basis in the plain or back part is
> Of that quaint work :

Now through all this—though difficult and laboured as is so much of Chapman's writing—the imitations of " A Midsummer Night's Dream " are, in my judgment, unmistakable. Hecate walking her thickets " in magic mood," precisely as did Titania and Oberon; the " juice " motive, with the word " eyes " following, two lines lower down; the " night "-and-" shadows " motive; the " humour " that " challengeth," and the " mysteries "; are not all of these found side by side in " The Dream "? The line—

> See then this planet of our lives descended—

is not far from " certain stars shot madly from their spheres "; and the plagiarism becomes certain, when it is realized that Shakespeare's " sea-maids," that follow, become, in Chapman, " fifty ocean nymphs "; while this couplet—

> By powerful charms, delightsome servitors
> Of flowers and shadows, mists and meteors—

is, almost, an epitome of the fairy-scenes in the forest, and contains, in every word, an idea from Shakespeare's fantasy, including the shooting stars, and the sweet, waiting handmaids of Titania, with the flowery names. Further, the Elysian palace corresponds to that of Theseus; and the " studied wishes," with which Hecate builded it, are simply Chapmanese for the rhymed blessings of Oberon's benediction;

> Now until the break of day,
> Through this house each fairy stray—

and, strangest of all, perhaps, are the last four lines of my quotation concerning that " tender building *Pax*

*Imperii* named," a title which at once recalls, not only the probability, that we have already argued, of Titania being Elizabeth, "the imperial votaress," but reminds us, also, of Oberon's,

> And each several chamber bless
> Through this palace with sweet peace.

Lastly, so far as this passage is concerned, we have the reference to

> a shadow like a Pyramis
> Whose basis in the plain or back part is
> Of that quaint work—

of which it may be remarked, that Pyramus is, certainly, in the "plain or back part" of that "quaint work" entitled "A Midsummer Night's Dream."

Our next quotation, continuing the same theme, runs,

> Since she the cares and toils of earth must tame :
> Then straight the flowers, the shadows and the mists
> (Fit matter for most pliant humourists)
> She hunters makes : and of that substance hounds
> Whose mouths deaf heaven, and furrow earth with wounds,
> And marvel not a nymph so rich in grace
> To hounds rude pursuits should be given in chase.
> For she could turn herself to every shape
> Of swiftest beasts, and at her pleasure 'scape ;
> Wealth fawns on fools ; virtues are meat for vices,
> Wisdom conforms herself to all Earth's guises,
> Good gifts are often given to men past good,
> And noblesse stoops sometimes beneath his blood.

This is, beyond question, a remarkable, and deeply significant, passage ; for, after what has gone before, I cannot doubt that the first six lines, above quoted, are another epitome of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," with its themes of flowers, shadows, hounds, and hunting, forming, indeed, "fit matter"—since he made of it a world's masterpiece—for that "most pliant of humourists," Shakespeare ; while the subsequent reference to Euthymia's power to "turn herself to every shape" and "at her pleasure 'scape," is precisely what

the fairy people of the play were wont to do, to themselves, as well as to their victims.[1]

Most deeply meaningful, however, and most purposeful of all, as I read them, are the lines that follow, beginning, "Wealth fawns on fools"; since here, beyond question, we have Chapman's sincere, because secret, opinion of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," expressed in the same enigmatic, yet, on the whole, decipherable manner, which, in the two "Bussy" plays we have seen him using for his veiled comments, and criticisms upon, "Twelfth Night," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth."

Chapman, quite evidently, at bottom, felt a deep admiration for the lyrical and fantastic beauties of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," as he did for the same qualities in "Twelfth Night"; nor will he deny, to the fairy play, even a kind of wisdom; since, as he admits,

Wisdom conforms herself to all Earth's guises;

yet this wise fool, Shakespeare, comprising, in his single person, all these so opposite qualities, of wisdom and folly, virtue and vice; this incalculable poet, in his private life, according to Chapman, "past good," yet to whom, nevertheless, by some unfathomable stroke of destiny, "good gifts" have, unquestionably, been given, is a being who altogether bewilders the viceless, and respectable, though splenetic author of "The Shadow of Night." Feeling, simultaneously, the urge to praise, and the jealous craving to blame—and despatched, Balaam-like, by rivalry, to curse this Balak—he is impelled, against his will, towards a blessing that, nevertheless, he cannot find it in him quite to achieve.

[1] Prof. A. S. Ferguson has challenged my assertion that Chapman had either "M.N.D." or "Richard II" in mind when writing his poem. In his opinion those passages are taken from Anaxagoras and other classical writers; to which I answer that classical allusions need not, and do not, in these instances, preclude contemporary topical and literary allusions. See correspondence in *Times Literary Supplement*, September 12, 19, 26, 1929.

Halting between eulogy and anathema; with hands raised, at one instant, to applaud; at another lifted, in pious horror, to condemn, Chapman falters dubiously between two opinions; only to conclude his paragraph, at last, impotently, upon the line:—

> And Noblesse stoops sometimes beneath her blood.

But the Noblesse is there, be it noted; and my readers, at this point, may well ask themselves to which, of the two claimants to the authorship of the Shakesperean plays, this passage may best be fitted—to the legendary, and lowly-born, actor of Stratford, or to the authentically wild-living young courtier-poet, Edward de Vere, whose family name, I may add, Chapman is going actually to use, within the next hundred lines of his poem?

Thus the rival poet continues, in words whose drift is clothed in more or less intentional obscurity; although, here and there, lines such as these:—

> the vaporous object of the eye
> Out-pierced the intellect in faculty.
> Baseness was nobler than nobility
>
> Eyes should guide bodies, and our souls our eyes,
> But now the world consists on contraries—

seem to harp again upon the same theme, that, though the soul is the only real, and sure, guide for the physical eye, this man of "contraries," known as William Shakespeare, whose baseness is, somehow, "nobler than nobility," does possess powers that "outpierce the intellect in faculty." Such, at least, is my rendering of the above quoted, mysterious lines.

Now we arrive at a passage, which, I contend, proves, almost beyond question, that Chapman had Oxford definitely in mind, when he wrote this poem; though, before quoting the determining words, I must remind my readers that, on page 207 of "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," I shewed how Chapman, in the first act of "The Revenge of Bussy

d'Ambois," makes an indubitable reference to Sir Horatio de Vere, as one of

> Our matchless race of soldiers (who) would spend
> In public wars not private brawls their spirits ;

and follows it, almost immediately, by implied reference to an individual addicted to

> courting strumpets and consuming birthrights
> In apishness and envy of attire ;

and who, almost certainly, is Edward de Vere, against whom such charges were commonly made. Here, then, we see Chapman again comparing the two Veres, one of whom he is still associating in his mind with " A Midsummer Night's Dream." This is the passage.

> Th' Italian Duke, a troop of horse
> Sent out in haste against some English force,
> From stately-sited sconce-torn Nimiguen
> Under whose walls, the Wall most Cynthian
> Stretcheth her silver limbs loaded with wealth,
> Hearing our horse were marching down by stealth,
> (Who looking for them) war's quick artisan,
> Fame-thriving Vere, that in those countries wan
> More fame than guerdon.

Here the reference to " fighting Vere " is plain enough ; and equally clear is the identity of the person aimed at in the next paragraph of the poem :—

> Hither this panther fled, now turn'd a boar,
> More huge than that th' Ætolians plagued so sore,
> And led the chase through noblest mansions,
> Gardens and groves, exempt from paragons,
> In all things ruinous and slaughtersome—

which supplies the " destructive boar " motive, and the " noblest mansions," of Oxford's family, and coat-of-arms, as also of " Venus and Adonis."

Again and again, then, with constant reiteration, we see Oxford and the Shakesperean plays inextricably intermixed, and interwoven ; a last echo of " The Dream " making itself audible, I think, once more, at

the close of the poem, in these lines so reminiscent of the seasonal disasters, and prodigies, catalogued in Titania's famous speech (II, 1) and that of Oberon, which follows, concerning the stars that "shot madly from their spheres."

> Convert the violent courses of thy floods,
> Remove whole fields of corn, and hugest woods,
> Cast hills into the sea, and make the stars
> Drop out of heaven and lose thy mariners.

"Ovid's Banquet of Sense" (1595), that follows, is, by general consent, an attempt to go one better than did Shakespeare, in "Venus and Adonis." The poem is not very much to the purpose of this book; but a few lines, both from the introductory letter to Matthew Roydon, and in the text, are interesting. These words, to Roydon:—

> Obscurity in affection of words and indigested conceits, is pedantical and childish; but where it shroudeth itself in the heart of its subject,[1] uttered with fitness of figure and expressive epithets, with that darkness will I still labour to be shadowed—

reveal their author's continued devotion to that Shadow-land of Darkness, at which Shakespeare, even when creating the night-scenes of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," had mocked in the earlier dramatic poem, "Love's Labour's Lost"; while the phrase, "I know that empty and dark spirits will complain of palpable night," seems to be an anticipation of the kind of comment that Chapman fully expects his rival to pass upon these verses.

Turning to the text of the poem, these five lines:—

> Ladies must be adored that are but fair,
> But apt besides with art to tempt the ear
> In notes of nature, is a goddess' part,
> Though oft men's nature's notes please more than Art.
> But here are Art and Nature both confined—

[1] It must not be forgotten that Shakespeare himself, alike in "Venus," sonnets and plays, is continually "shrouding himself in the heart of his subject."

seem to repeat the now hoary gibe, against Shakespeare —this time as the author of "Venus and Adonis"—that he "wanted art," to match that with which the gods had endowed the author of "Ovid's Banquet of Sense."

Concerning the significance of the Shakesperean allusions in "Banquet of Sense," there may be some question; but when we turn to the poem that follows it, namely "A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy," its interest and importance leap to the eye; one's only difficulty being that of determining precisely at whom Chapman's veiled ironies are aimed. That the poem generally attacks "Shakespeare" is, however, undeniable; for him, and no other, being intended the opening line:—

> Muses that sing Love's sensual empery—

and, possibly, the last three lines of the first stanza—

> Your eyes were never yet let in to see
> The majesty and riches of the mind,
> But dwell in darkness; for your God is blind—

a courageous counter-attack, as I read it, upon the writer who has so often accused Chapman himself of being a willing habitant of the darkness.

There is, however, nothing in those lines to identify them, at all, with Oxford; but, when we come to stanza 4, there commence a series of allusions, that, in my judgment, are intended for no one else; and which, further, are about to link him up, in a manner at once mysterious and definite, with the author of the Shakesperean plays. The first of these is the reference, in stanza 4, to

> The robes, looks, deeds, desires and whole descent
> Of female natures,

every word of which I believe to be aimed at Oxford, whose fantastic attire we shall see elsewhere alluded to, in a moment, and whose feministic mind—as viewed by his enemies—has already been hinted at, I think, by Chapman, in the phrase, "manless natures," in "Hymnus

in Noctem," of "The Shadow of Night": the whole sentence leading up to further attacks upon the Earl, which we will examine, as we come to them. Stanza 5 has one line that seems to continue the same thought—

(Virtue) bears one chanceless mind in all mischances—

words that contain, I think, a covert reference to the virtuous equanimity of Oxford's cousin, Horatio de Vere, the Horatio of the Hamlet play, to which Shakespeare himself alludes, in the Prince's well-known speech, eulogizing his friend's equanimity, and mental poise. On page 207 of my last book, I shewed how, in Act I, Scene 1, of "The Revenge of Bussy," Baligny, in very similar fashion, contrasts "the virtuous labour," as a warrior, of Horatio de Vere, in

> Not courting strumpets, and consuming birthrights
> In apishness and envy of attire

with the viciousness of Oxford supposed to be addicted to such misdeeds—a theory confirmed by the next stanza, No. VI, which harps upon the same theme, transforming "female natures," of stanza 4 into "female humours," and repeating the "apish" dress-motive of the lines from "The Revenge of Bussy," above quoted. Stanza VI runs thus:—

Her look doth promise and her life assure;
A right line forcing a rebateless point,
In her high deeds, through everything obscure,
To full perfection; not the weak disjoint
Of female humours; nor the Protean rages
Of pied-faced fashion that doth shrink and swell,
Working poor men like waxen images,
And makes them apish strangers where they dwell,
Can alter her, titles of primacy,
Courtship of antic gestures, brainless jests,
Blood without soul of false nobility,
Nor any folly that the world infests
Can alter her who with her constant guises
To living virtues turns the deadly vices.

All this, I submit, is intended for no one but Oxford; for, beginning with the charge of effeminacy, or of "female humours," this, as I have already shewn, was one of the stock taunts aimed at the Earl, and echoed, for example, by Tamyra in "The Revenge of Bussy," II, 1, where her phrase, "unmanly rages"—very near to the "protean rages" of Chapman's stanza—is set among repeated borrowings from "Hamlet." The same thought, perhaps, lies behind the words, spoken by Guise, of Clermont-Hamlet, in V. 1. of the same play—

> How strangely thou art loved of both the sexes—

and repeated in Gabriel Harvey's "Speculum Tuscanismi"—undoubtedly aimed at Oxford, who, hot with Italian enthusiasms, had left Tuscany in 1576—and again in the line:—

> No words but valorous, no works but womanish only.[1]

The dandyfied, and "pied-faced," fashion of Oxford's dress, worn in an elaborate Franco-Italian style, was a familiar sight in Elizabethan London; nor should I be in the least surprised to know, were it possible, that Chapman had Oxford in mind, when, in I, 2, of "Bussy d'Ambois," at the outset of many obvious borrowings from "Twelfth Night," and just before the entry of Monsieur, the Duke of Alençon—who, with something of Oxford in him as well, is the historic prototype of Orsino—he makes Montsurry, when comparing the courts of France and England, say:—

> No question we shall see them imitate
> (Though afar off) the fashions of our Courts,
> As they have ever aped us in attire.
> Never were men so weary of their skins,

[1] R. B. McKerrow, in V. 73 of his edition of "Works of Thomas Nash," writes that the quarrel between Nash and Harvey seems to be an offshoot of the one between Oxford and Sidney in 1579. See "Speculum Tuscanismi." (Three letters E. 2v. "Works of Harvey," Ed. Grosart I, 84-86, in ridicule of an Italianate Englishman (i.e. Oxford.)

And apt to leap out of themselves as they ;
Who, when they travel to bring forth rare men,
Come home, deliver'd of a fine French suit.
Their brains lie with their tailors, and get babies
For their most complete issue ; he's the sole heir
To all the moral virtues that first greets
The light with a new fashion, which becomes them
Like apes, disfigured with the attires of men.

The above passage, be it noted, contains motives exactly analagous to those of the stanza from "A Coronet," which we are now considering ; as a glance at these parallels will shew.

| A CORONET FOR HIS MISTRESS. | BUSSY D'AMBOIS, I, 2. |
|---|---|
| Female humours [1] | Their brains lie with tailors and get babies |
| Protean rages | weary of their skins and apt to leap out of them |
| Pied-faced fashion | with a new fashion |
| apish strangers where they dwell | ever aped us in attire |
| | apes disfigured with the attires of men |
| | *Cf.* also, the idea of transformation of Englishmen into Frenchmen. |

It was, in part, Oxford's habit of dressing in a pied-faced, Franco-Italian fashion, that—patriotic though he unquestionably was—made him, in the eyes of certain Englishmen, a demi-foreigner[2] and "apish stranger where he dwelt"—a point of view again exactly reproduced in the "Speculum Tuscanismi," the lampoon on Oxford, by Gabriel Harvey, from which I have already quoted :—

No words but valorous, no works but womanish only.
For life Magnificoes, not a beck but glorious in show,
In deed most frivolous, not a look but Tuscanish always.[2]

[1] The feministic intellectualism of Richard II, a character also imitated by Chapman, in his "Byron's Tragedy," should be remembered in this connection.

[2] Oxford was a strong supporter of the Alençon marriage ; and Alençon, on his mother's side, is of Tuscan birth.

His cringing side neck, eyes glancing, fisnamie smirking,
With forefinger kisse, and brave embrace to the footward.
Large bellied Kodpeased doublet, unkodpeasd half hose,
Straight to the dock like a shirt, and close to the britch like a diveling.
A little apish flat couched fast to the pate like an oyster,
French Camarick ruffs, deep with a whiteness starched to the purpose.
Every one A per se A, his terms and braveries in print,
Delicate in speech, quaint in array, conceited in all points,
In courtly guiles a passing singular odd man,
For Gallants a brave Mirror, a Primrose of Honour,
A diamond for nonce, a fellow peerless in England.
Not the like discourser for Tongue, and head to be found out,
Not the like resolute man for great and serious affairs,
Not the like Lynx to spy out secrets and privities of States,[1]
Eyed like to Argus, eared like to Midas, nos'd like to Naso,
Wing'd like to Mercury, fittest of a thousand for to be employ'd;
This, nay more than this, doth practise of Italy in one year.
None do I name, but some do I know, that a piece of a twelve month[2]
Hath so perfited outly and inly both body, both soul,
That none for sense and sense half matchable with them.
A vulture's smelling, Ape's tasting, sight of an eagle,
A Spider's touching, Hart's hearing, might of a Lion.
Compounds of wisdom, wit, prowess, bounty, behaviour,
All gallant virtues, all qualities of body and soul;
O thrice ten hundred thousand times blessed and happy,
Blessed and happy travail, Travailer most blessed and happy.[3] . . .

Tell me in good sooth, doth it not too evidently appear that this English poet wanted but a good pattern before his

[1] Harvey seems to recognize here, if half ironically, Oxford's fitness for secret service, to which I shall refer in cap. VII.

[2] Both these are references to Oxford's visit to Italy, including Tuscany, 1575-76. *Cf.* also "As You Like It," IV, 1, where Rosalind twits Jaques (Oxford) the Traveller. "Travailer" probably puns upon Oxford's work; e.g. as Kent in "Lear," "full of labours." See post pp. 364-65.

eyes, as it might be some delicate and choice elegant Poesy of good Master Sidney's or Master Dyer's (our very Castor and Pollux for such and many greater matters) when this trim gear was in the hatching?

In this remarkable passage, which, with due allowance for malicious exaggeration, one may take, I suppose, as a "mirror" of Oxford's singular personality and character, you have the "apish" motive again twice repeated in "the little Apish Flatte," and "apes tasting"; and the "pied fashion," and "strangers where they dwell" motives in the "French camarick Ruffes" against the "Tuscanish always" looks, and the "practise of Italy," which Oxford had acquired during the tour of 1575–76; while the "antic gestures" of Chapman are specifically noted by Harvey, in such descriptive phrases as "cringing side neck," "forefinger kisse," and "brave embrace to the footwarde." As for Chapman's line—

Blood without soul, of false nobility—

it is one of his iterated charges against the Earl, comparable with,

How to be truly noble, truly wise,

spoken of Clermont, Chapman's perfected Hamlet, by Baligny, in "The Revenge of Bussy," I, 1; and set among obvious imitations of Shakespeare's play. In both cases, Chapman, quite evidently, has the same historic original, namely Oxford, in mind; sets the Earl's false, because merely blue-blooded, nobility of birth, against the genuine, because soulful, exaltation of Clermont's character; following, in the "Bussy" play, with Espernon's phrase concerning "contempt of outward greatness."[1] For Chapman's words in the 6th stanza—

brainless jests,
Blood without soul—

[1] *Cf.* Sonnet 92/125 concerning the bearing of the canopy, and its phrase "with my externe the outward honouring."

I refer the reader to "Bussy d'Ambois," wherein, at the close of III, 2, Bussy, in a speech which is aimed, almost certainly, at Oxford, in the character of Macbeth —and is, moreover, largely built up of phrases imitated from lines in that play—says :—

> You will jest
> With God, and your soul to the devil tender
> For lust; kiss horror, and with death engender:
> That your foul body is a Lernean fen
> Of all the maladies breeding in all men;
> That you are utterly without a soul—

wherein the "jest" and "soul" motives are repeated, together with the violent attacks upon Monsieur's morals, which appear again in the closing lines of the stanza we are considering :—

> her constant guises,
> To living virtues turns the deadly vices.

Chapman's use of the word "guises" here is noteworthy, when one remembers how frequently the name Guise occurs in the scene III, 2, of "Bussy d'Ambois"—from which I have quoted above—and how much addicted Chapman was to puns, and word-play. Charges of vicious behaviour were frequently made against Oxford; and in my last book I openly hinted that, while the "Monsieur," of Chapman's first "Bussy" play, was historically Alençon (Orsino of "Twelfth Night"), he is, in part, also Oxford himself.

Save that the words, "true continence," are in the same vein as "false nobility," and so forth, the 7th stanza contains little that is pertinent to our theme; but the concluding line of the 8th stanza—

> For words want art, and Art wants words to praise her.

seems to be another instance of the charge already implied by Chapman, in this poem—and to be aimed, by Jonson, at Shakespeare, in later years—that he "wanted art." If that be so, the line is important, as further tending, hereabouts, definitely to connect Oxford with

Shakespeare, in Chapman's mind. Still more significant, however, is the phrasing of the next stanza, 9, which runs as follows :—

For words want art, and Art wants words to praise her;
  Yet shall my active and industrious pen
  Wind his sharp forehead through those parts that raise her,
  And register her worth past rarest women.
Herself shall be my Muse; that well will know
  Her proper inspirations; and assuage—
  With her dear love—the wrongs my fortunes show,
  Which to my youth bind heartless grief in age.
Herself shall be my comfort and my riches,
  And all my thoughts I will on her convert;
  Honour and error, which the world bewitches,
  Shall still crown fools, and tread upon desert;
And never shall my friendless verse envy
  Muses that Fame's loose feathers beautify.

Here, beyond question, we are coming to matter demanding the closest scrutiny. We are about to see "Shakespeare" attacked again; and, at once, with the "wind-his-sharp-forehead" metaphor, here is Chapman verbally imitating the routing, and snouting, of the hungry boar, in the forest; while the couplet beginning :—

Honour and error, which the world bewitches—

seems, as I understand it, merely to reiterate the dismal contrast between Oxford's powers, by his exalted rank, and perversely fantastic charm, still to bewitch a world which overlooks his errors and follies, while it treads heedlessly upon Chapman's great desert. Most arresting of all, however, is the last couplet :—

And never shall my friendless verse envy [1]
Muses that Fame's loose feathers beautify—

because in these words we appear to have a repetition, almost, of Greene's envious attack, written three years

[1] Mr. J. M. Robertson, on p. 103 of his book, has quoted this line, without, however, perceiving its importance to the Shakespeare and Chapman problem.

before, in 1592, upon a certain "upstart crow beautified with our feathers," and, as has generally been supposed, up till now, intended for the Stratford actor, as the author of the Shakesperean plays. No less interesting is the 10th, and last, stanza of the poem, which runs :—

Muses that Fame's loose feathers beautify,
And such as scorn to tread the theatre,
As ignorant : the seed of memory
Have most inspired, and shown their glories there
To noblest wits and men of highest doom,
That for the kingly laurel bent affair
The theatres of Athens and of Rome,
Have been the crowns, and not the base impair.
Far then, be this foul cloudy-brow'd contempt
From like-plumed birds : and let your sacred rhymes
From honour's court their servile feet exempt,
That live by soothing moods, and serving times.
And let my love adorn with modest eyes,
Muses that sing Love's sensual emperies.

This last stanza, which is of paramount importance, we will examine in a moment ; but, before doing so, I will ask the reader to consider, with me, the implications of the "upstart crow" [1] passage, which, it will be generally conceded, Chapman, at this moment, has in mind. That passage by Greene, we all agree, is aimed at "Shakespeare" ; but it has not been generally observed that the following lines, from the paragraph that precedes, and leads up to it, are aimed at Oxford, when Greene urges that his fellow playwright has

> a libertie to reproove all and name none ; for one being spoken to, all are offended ; none being blamed no man is injured. Stop shallow water still running, it will rage, or tread on a worme and it will turne : then blame not Schollers vexed with sharpe lines, if they reprove too much thy liberty of reproofe.

But where, in those lines, you may ask, is a reference to

[1] Greene's "Groatsworth of Wit," etc., pp. 45, 46, ed. G. B. Harrison. Bodley Head Quartos, VI.

de Vere? I answer, that Greene, having deliberately informed all whom it may concern that he is "naming none,"—in precisely the same way that Harvey, after lampooning Oxford for some 20 consecutive lines, assures his readers that "none do I name"—proceeds, by a subtle play upon words, recognizably to name Edward de Vere, and none other, in the punning phrases, "Stop shallow water still running, it will rage," which means, I take it, that if you obstruct a shallow stream, through which an Ox can ford, it will rage, or bubble, into rebellion;—"rages," by the way, being one of the many sins charged against Oxford, in stanza VI of Chapman's poem, already quoted. Greene's words concerning "shallow water," moreover, contain also a pun upon Oxford's family name of Vere, a spring—Ver being the river, in northern France, from which district, near Coutance, the Earl's ancestors migrated to England.[1] Greene, however, is not yet satisfied; and to confirm his identification, he inserts yet another pun; for the next line, "Tread on a worme, and it will turne," plays, obviously, upon the second meaning of the name Ver, which is "worm." It seems to be undeniable, then, that when Greene wrote his famous attack upon "Shakespeare," he had the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford in mind.

Let us now pass on to the much-discussed paragraph.

> Unto none of you (like mee) sought those burres to cleave: those Puppets (I meane) that spake from our mouths, those Anticks garnisht in our colours. Is it not strange, that I, to whome they all have beene beholding: is it not like that you, to whome they all have beene beholding, shall (were yee in that case as I am now) bee both at once of them forsaken? Yes trust them not: for there is an upstart Crow, beautified with our feathers, that with his *Tygers hart wrapt in a Players hyde*, supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you: and beeing an absolute *Johannes fac totum*, is in his

[1] See "Some Acct. of the Family of de Vere," by Rev. Severne A. A. Magendie, p. 5.

owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in the countrey. O that I might intreat your rare wits to be imploied in more profitable courses: and let those Apes imitate your past excellence, and never more acquaint them with your admired inventions. I knowe the best husband of you all will never prove an Usurer. . . .

Now I cannot pretend fully to interpret the meaning of this baffling passage; but I incline to think that it may refer to some unfair exploitation of Greene, and his fellow playwrights, by the secret Government Committee, which, as I shall endeavour to shew in another chapter, seems to have been employing them, under Oxford, to write propagandist plays, during the continuance of the Anglo-Spanish War. For the moment, however, I will content myself with the suggestion that Greene, when he refers to "Anticks garnisht in our colours," obviously means the actors; but when he speaks of the "upstart crow beautified with our feathers, who supposes he is as well able to bombast out a blank verse as the best of you," I suggest that he is referring not, as has hitherto been supposed, to a professional actor turned author, but to an author turned actor; since it must be taken for granted that a professional player can efficiently bombast out a blank verse—else why did he become a professional—though it does not, in the least, follow that an author, turned actor, can recite his own lines efficiently.

My contention, therefore, is that Oxford, the author, occasionally turned actor; and I can, perhaps, best open my argument by calling in aid the late Dr. J. Semple Smart's book, "Shakespeare—Truth and Tradition"[1] (1928), wherein the author, who was wholly orthodox in his views, discusses, very intelligently, the problems raised by the passage under discussion.

In addressing Marlowe and the rest Greene states that "to none of you sought those burrs to cleave." He means that the actors of whom he speaks had not tried to cultivate

[1] pp. 191-201.

their acquaintance; and, as Shakespeare is one of the actors, he is also one of the burrs, and has not tried to cleave to Marlowe;' *in other words, he has not moved in the same circle*, and there has been no fellowship or intimacy between them.

Now here, I think, Dr. Smart has dimly perceived a part of what I believe to be the truth. Holding Shakespeare to be the actor of Stratford-on-Avon, and the "upstart crow," he perceives, nevertheless, that the man aimed at—whom I, of course, hold to be Oxford—has not moved in the same circle with Marlowe, and that "There has been no fellowship or intimacy between them." Quite certainly, the Lord Great Chamberlain of England did *not* move in the same circle, social or other, with the atheistical playwright. Dr. Smart, very rightly, from his viewpoint, goes on to adopt the generally accepted inference, that Greene's jealousy was enhanced by the fact that "the ambitious and conceited actor, not content with acting, has now set up as a poet and dramatist," and fancies himself well qualified to write high-sounding speeches. Greene even offers a sample—writes Dr. Smart—of the stuff which the new poet is producing, namely—

Tiger's hart, wrapt in a player's hide.

The professor then goes on to point out that Greene, apparently holding rubbish so pretentious to be unworthy even of accurate quotation, has deliberately misquoted the line, which was originally written;—

O tiger's heart, wrapt in a woman's hide

in "3 Henry VI," I, 4; the words being spoken by the Duke of York, before his murder, to Margaret of Anjou exultant over her enemy's defeat and ruin.

Now with the professor's dictum, which follows—that all this supplies evidence that Greene knew Shakespeare, and no other, to be the author of this part of "3 Henry VI," I wholly concur; but I feel certain, at the same time, that the deeper implications of the passage

have escaped Dr. Smart, in common with other commentators. This is my own attempt at an interpretation.

The historical plays of Shakespeare, are, admittedly, anti-Yorkist, and pro-Lancastrian, as we should expect of dramas written during the reign, and, probably, with the connivance, of a Lancastrian queen. The Earls of Oxford, also, had always been valiant supporters of the Red Rose; the famous Thirteenth Earl, that "lion of the Lancastrian cause," having borne the sword of state, at Henry VII's coronation, after the Battle of Bosworth: and I suggest, that when Greene borrows, from Shakespeare, that Yorkist line, aimed at a Lancastrian, he is covertly referring to Oxford's connection with the Shakesperean plays; and, in the "tiger's heart within a woman's hide"—i.e inward ferocity hidden beneath externa lfeminism—he is making just such a veiled allusion to Oxford, the feminist, as, a few pages back, we saw Chapman making, in the line describing the young peer's "female humours," and protean rages.

Dr. Smart holds that Greene's words, which follow, concerning the individual who "supposes that he is as well able to bombast out a blanke verse as the best of you," apply, as we have seen, not to the player speaking the lines, but to the poet writing them; but I cannot agree; for I am convinced that Greene's reference is to Oxford, as author turned actor, and not to any actor turned author. I would not, of course, suggest that Oxford ever became an actor in the professional sense of that word; but, to a man of his impulsive and enthusiastic disposition, the sudden desire to play one of his own heroic, or lyrical, leads, is exactly such a whim as would have proved irresistible; and the play of "Hamlet"—if, as I am convinced, it be at bottom, autobiographical—does shew technical efficiency in writing and declaiming verse, and a personal intimacy with the players, as close as the wide differences in social status will allow: for it will be remembered how, in the second scene of Act II, the Prince gives to the players

a sample of his elocutionary ability, that draws from Polonius the eulogium

'Fore God, my lord, well spoken, with good accent and discretion.

My suggestion, then—fitting perfectly with Greene's text—is, that, when the fancy took him, Oxford, during his earlier years as a dramatist, occasionally played his own leads; a theory confirmed not only by his well-known many-sidedness of the "fac totum," but also by such lines as that in sonnet 122/110, wherein he admits having made himself "a motley to the view"; words which, contrary, for once, to the opinion of Col. Ward, I hold to bear a wider, and more literal, interpretation than the, nevertheless, quite legitimate one, that the dramatist, by exhibiting vicariously upon the stage many phases of his own life and character, had thus indeed made himself, in a sense, a "motley," to the public gaze. This opinion, which I grant to be a bold one, is, I think, borne out by many other considerations, among which may be set the well-known epigram of John Davies of Hereford:

TO OUR ENGLISH TERANCE, Mr. Will. Shake-speare.

Some say, good Will, which I, in sport, do sing,
Hadst thou not plaid some kingly parts in sport,
Thou hadst been a companion for a king,
And beene a King among the meaner sort.
Some others raile; but, raile as they thinke fit,
Thou hast no railing, but a raigning wit;
And honesty thou Sow'st, which they do reape
So to increase their stock which they do keep.

Now, as Mr. Basil Lawrence has pointed out,[1] the Terence of ancient times was not generally believed to be the author of the plays that were produced under his name, which were attributed to Scipio, and to Loelius; so that, by likening Mr. Will Shake-speare, with the

[1] "Notes on the Authorship of the Shakesperean Plays and Poems," pp. 135-137. The author is arguing the Baconian theory.

hyphenated surname, to Terence, it seems a fair inference that Davies of Hereford knew Will Shake-speare to be a pseudonym, just as Greene meant Shake-scene, also hyphenated, to be one; and I now further suggest that, when Davies wrote, "Hadst thou not plaid," and so forth, he meant, quite literally, that the author of the plays had, on occasion, and in sport, actually played some of the kingly characters; such, for example, as Richard II, in his own historical dramas, and had been "railed" at for doing so. Certainly the passage, as a whole, suggests that Shake-speare, considered as an actor, was, indeed, a "king among the meaner sort"—which the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, playing an occasional lead at the Globe, would certainly have been; and the last two lines obviously suggest that he was also an author, who had increased their stock of actable plays. Further, Mr. Lawrence, after quoting the significant epigram, by the author of "Wit's Recreation" (1640), to Mr. William Shake-speare (note the hyphen again), and asking, pertinently, why our praise must be silent?—

> Shake-speare, we must be silent in our praise:
> 'Cause our encomiums will but blast thy bays—[1]

goes on to quote from Walter Begley, in "Bacon's Nova Resuscitatio," yet more verses by John Davies of Hereford, which, in his judgment, "refer to Shaxper of Stratford." They run:—

> And some I love for painting, poesie,
> And say fell Fortune cannot be excused
> That hath for better uses you refused:
> Wit, courage, good shape, good parts and all good,
> As long as all these goods are no worse used,
> And though the stage doth stain pure gentle blood,
> Yet generous are ye in minde and moode.

In the margin of these lines are the initials, W. S., followed by the initials, R. B., which, no doubt, stand for William Shakespeare and Richard Burbage. Mr.

[1] I explain this as another reference to the mysterious Oxford's wounded name and concealed identity, as author of the plays.

Lawrence, and others, hold that the first pair of initials stands for the Stratford actor; but it seems to me that they stand, quite clearly, for Oxford, and that the words following them :—

fell Fortune cannot be excused
That hath for better uses you refused

with their sequel, are almost a paraphrase of sonnet 118/111—

O for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
That did not better for my life provide
Than public means which public manners breeds.
Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
And almost thence my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like the dyer's hand.

The analogy here, a very striking one, is fortified by Davies' words in the last but one of the quoted lines, "the stage doth stain pure gentle blood"—words which epitomize the sonnet, including the staining motive of the "dyer's hand," and, moreover, refer openly to the "pure gentle blood" of this individual, whom malign Fortune has cast upon the theatre. How can it be logically argued that these words are aimed at the humbly born actor from Stratford?

One last point I will add to my argument—that Oxford, besides being author of the plays, was also, occasionally, for a time, an actor in them; and that corroboration I find in the ever-recurring hints of concealed identity, visible in the texts, followed, at no long interval, by the entry, upon the stage, of the character representing Oxford himself in the play; as, for example, in "As You Like It" (II, 7) when, almost immediately upon the Duke's line—

For I can no where find him like a man—

comes the entry of the individual referred to, Jaques, who, as we shall see later, with Touchstone, represents Oxford in this comedy. More significant still is the

instance in "Romeo and Juliet," II, 4, wherein, immediately preceding some lively dialogue concerning Romeo having given his friends "the counterfeit," and "the slip," we have the entry of Romeo, heralded by Benvolio's, "Here comes Romeo," and by Mercutio's "Without his roe like a dried herring"—Romeo without his roe leaving MEO, or, shorn of the M, "E O," which was the actual signature of the early Oxford poems.[1] The conclusion I come to, then, is that Mercutio's words are intended to mean, "Here comes Edward Oxford"; and that the young Earl, "in sport," did, occasionally, tread the stage, in princely and kingly parts, of which himself was the author, and, in some instances, the historic original also.[2]

Now, after this digression, let us return to Greene, whom we left upon the line concerning the "upstart crow" beautified with a playwright's feathers, who, with "his Tyger's heart wrapt in a Player's hide, supposes he is as well able to bombaste out a blanke verse as the best of you."

These words, I repeat, refer, in my opinion, to Oxford, the author, become actor; a theory further supported by the sequel, "And being an absolute Johannes fac totum, is in his owne conceit the onely Shake-scene in a countrey."

Now that expression, "Johannes fac totum," has generally been taken to mean that Shakespeare, the actor-poet of Stratford, was a versatile individual, who could, and would, turn his hand to anything, from holding horses' heads outside the theatre, to adapting, writing, or acting in, the plays performed within its doors; but here I am wholly at one with Dr. Smart, in affirming that we possess no evidence whatever that the Stratford actor was ever generally known as a "factotum," or

[1] See post pp. 310–311.

[2] We know from Ward's "Oxford" (p. 163), that the Earl and other courtiers presented and acted in a masque before the Queen in 1579. Jonson almost certainly acted in some of his own plays, e.g. Morose in "Epicoene."

that anyone, excepting Greene, in that passage, ever applied such a name to him; and I further agree with the author of "Shakespeare—Truth and Tradition," [1] that Greene did not intend, by the use of the word "factotum," to convey the meaning that the actor was doing odd jobs about the theatre, including the furbishing up of old pieces; but rather—as I hold—that Shakespeare, the Earl in disguise, was a somewhat swollen-headed individual, who believed himself capable of doing anything.[2] And, in fact, when once you regard Oxford as the actual author of the plays, the Johannes Factotum epithet becomes, instantly, applicable; not only because we know, historically, from Capt. Ward's "Life of Edward de Vere," that the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, as a young man, possessed strong military and political, as well as literary ambitions; but also because the very writings that we have been considering, Gabriel Harvey's "Speculum Tuscanismi," and Chapman, to some extent, in his "Bussy" plays, elaborate the charge against Oxford, that he thought himself a *capable-de-tout*. A backward glance at the quoted passage from Harvey, with its long satirical catalogue of the Earl's aptitudes, and faculties, will, I think, make the argument clear to every reader, if he will turn also to V, 2, of "Bussy d'Ambois," and to III, 4, of "The Revenge of Bussy"—passages which are aimed at Oxford, as the historic original of Hamlet, or at an idealized, Senecal Oxford, imitated, in part, from "Hamlet."

GUISE. all the wondrous fabric man should have,
And leave it headless for a perfect man,
As give a full man valour, virtue, learning. . . .
MONSIEUR (ALENÇON). Here will be one
Young, learned, valiant, virtuous and full mann'd;
One on whom Nature spent so rich a hand. . . .
So *this whole man*. . . .

[1] pp. 194-198.

[2] An analagous case is that of the dramatist, Strindberg, who adopted, in succession, numberless trades and professions.

Here it will be seen that exactly similar ideas of the perfected factotum,—though in serious, as against ironical speech,—are present to Chapman's mind. Again in "The Revenge of Bussy," III, 4, immediately following upon the famous passage, in which Oxford is referred to by name, we find reference, by Clermont, Chapman's idealized Hamlet, to the man,

> Officious,
> Observant, wary, serious and grave,
> Fearful and passionate, insulting, raging—

all of which is exactly in the vein of Chapman's writings upon Oxford, in "The Coronet," followed, soon after, by Renel's,

> As good consort with you
> (i.e. Clermont) as with an angel.

These arguments and analogies, then, lead me to the firm opinion, that Greene's words in "Groatsworth of Witte," concerning the "Factotum," are aimed directly, though secretly, at Oxford; not merely as the author of the Shakesperean plays, but also as an occasional actor in them, and as one who believed himself capable of exercising every function proper to man—a charge that one is not in the least surprised to hear levelled at the possessor of the most imaginatively creative intellect that has yet appeared in the world of letters.

Now, before passing on to the clinching last stanza of Chapman's "Coronet," there remains something yet to be said concerning the connection between Greene's attack on Shakespeare, Chapman's apparent reference to it, in the poem we are considering, and Shakespeare's third part of "King Henry VI." Dr. Smart, in the study from which I have already quoted,[1] reminds us that, in 1595, the very year of the publication of the "Coronet," an incorrect, and defective, edition of "3 Henry VI" was published, as "The True Tragedy of Richard, Duke of York," a title that seems clearly to

[1] pp. 198, 199.

derive from the passage in I, 4, containing the "tiger's heart" line. This "True Tragedy," generally considered to be the work of an earlier poet, has been attributed, in part, to Marlowe, and Greene, among others; and from it, almost certainly, Shakespeare produced the third part of "Henry VI," as it stands in the Folio, much as "Henry V" was developed from "The Famous Victories." [1] Now in the speech that follows the one containing the "tiger's heart" line, comes this, from York, addressed to Margaret :—

> But you are more inhuman, more inexorable
> O ten times more than tigers of Hyrcania—

a couplet which, at once, recalls, and may be, in part, the source of, the lines spoken by Monsieur, in "Bussy d'Ambois," III, 2—

> I think thee then a man
> That dares as much as a wild horse or tiger
>
> Thou art more ridiculous and vainglorious. . . .

a passage that, as I have pointed out elsewhere, connects up with "Macbeth," III, 4, wherein Macbeth specifically mentions the "Hyrcan tiger." A little further on, in "3 Henry VI," II, 2, Queen Margaret denounces Richard of Gloucester; thus :—

> But thou art neither like thy sire nor dam;
> But like a foul mis-shapen stigmatic,
> Mark'd by the destinies to be avoided,
> As venom toads, or lizards' dreadful stings—

words very close, in quality and kind, to others in Monsieur's speech above quoted :—

> Thy gall
> Turns all thy blood to poison, which is cause
> Of that toad pool that stands in thy complexion,
> And makes thee (with a cold and earthy moisture,
> Which is the dam of putrefaction,
> As plague to thy damn'd pride) rot as thou livest ;—

[1] Capt. B. M. Ward has clearly shewn Oxford's connection with "The Famous Victories," in *The Review of English Studies*, Vol. IV, No. 15. July, 1928.

both passages having a general allusion to foul, mis-shapen, damp, earth-clammy things, and both using the "dam" motive. When writing my last book, I did not realize that Chapman, apparently, had these scenes of "Henry VI," Part III, as well as "Macbeth" in mind, when he gave to Monsieur those above quoted lines in "Bussy d'Ambois."

Here, then, after this long digression, I am free to return to the 10th, and last, stanza of Chapman's "Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy," which is as follows:—

Muses that Fame's loose feathers beautify,
And such as scorn to tread the theatre,
As ignorant: the seed of memory
Have most inspired, and shown their glories there
To noblest wits and men of highest doom,
That for the kingly laurel bent affair
The theatres of Athens and of Rome,
Have been the crowns, and not the base impair.
Far, then, be this foul cloudy-brow'd contempt
From like-plumed birds: and let your sacred rhymes
From honour's court their servile feet exempt,
That live by soothing moods, and serving times.
And let my love adorn with modest eyes,
Muses that sing Love's sensual emperies.

Here the opening line, repeating the closing line of stanza 9, picks up for us, at once, the theme of Chapman's and Greene's similarly worded attacks, and confronts us again with the same problem, namely, how to account clearly for the joint reference to an individual who is not only Shake-scene, or Shake-speare, honoured by

Muses that Fame's loose feathers beautify;

but is, besides, so much an aristocrat that he "scorns to tread the theatre, as ignorant."

Now not even the most sceptical of my readers, I imagine, will endeavour to argue that a man of lowly and even rustic, birth, such as the Stratford actor was could conceivably have "scorned to tread the theatre

as ignorant." The obvious solution, I contend, fitting in with all that has gone before, as well as with what is to come, must be, that Oxford is the man referred to; and that he, occasionally, for a time, actually performed in his own plays, as Jonson also, almost certainly, did.[1] Professor Connes, commenting upon Capt. Ward's "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," in the "Revue Anglo-Américaine" for February, 1929—and, upon such points, there are few more shrewd or better informed observers—writes "Qui sait si, acteur en même temps qu'auteur, il (Oxford) n'a pas joué le rôle (Henry V) lui même?"

The context, moreover, makes the matter reasonably clear; for the lines that follow:—

> the seed of memory
> Have most inspired, and shown their glories there
> To noblest wits and men of highest doom—

mean, as I understand them, that neither Oxford, nor any other aristocrat, out of the many who were then potentially interested in the theatre, need be ashamed of that fact; since the memories, and glory, of the ancient drama had, long before Oxford's day, inspired men of "noblest wits," and "highest doom"; otherwise men of destiny, and of hereditary rank, such as Oxford pre-eminently was. The references to the "theatres of Athens and of Rome" recall, not only Jonson's later Folio lines, concerning "Insolent Greece or haughtie Rome," but also—as, indeed, does the whole stanza—Guise's speech, in "The Revenge of Bussy," I, 1—

> I would have these things
> Brought upon stages: to let mighty misers
> See all their grave and serious miseries play'd,
> As once they were in Athens and old Rome;

followed by Clermont-Hamlet's remarks, obviously borrowed from, imitating, and commenting upon

[1] *E.g.* "Morose" in "The Silent Woman." See my "Shakespeare, Jonson and Wilkins as Borrowers," pp. 174-175.

Hamlet, as also upon Jaques (who is also Oxford) in "As You Like It," when Baligny asks :

> Is not all the world esteem'd a stage ? [1]

The lines :—

> Far, then, be this foul cloudy-brow'd contempt
> From like-plumed birds,

are another application of Greene's "feather" metaphor to Oxford ; rebuking his high-brow contempt for the stage, while the couplet :—

> From honour's *court* their servile feet exempt,
> That live by soothing moods and serving times—

is another hit, as I take it, at Oxford, the courtier's, servile, and time-serving, methods, adopted, as Chapman would imply, wherever "thrift may follow fawning." The passage is closely comparable with lines in "The Revenge of Bussy," III, 4, from which I have already quoted, many times, where Clermont names these very methods :—

> If you would consul be, says one, of Rome,
> You must be watching, starting out of sleeps ;
> Every way whisking ; glorifying plebeians ;
> Kissing patricians hands, rot at their doors ;
> Speak and do basely ; every day bestow
> Gifts and observance upon one or other—

The above is comparable also with the passage in the same play (IV, 6), wherein Guise, praising the Senecal man, Chapman's idealized Hamlet, Clermont, points to

> His just contempt of jesters, parasites,
> Servile observers, and polluted tongues :

nor must I fail to link these lines, as, indeed, the whole subject may be linked, with sonnet 118/111, wherein Shakespeare repeats exactly this mood recorded by Chapman, in the "Coronet," of inherent antipathy to the stage. It is the sonnet already quoted in this book, and opening :—

[1] For my analysis of this scene, see "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 214–222.

O, for my sake, do you with Fortune chide—

lines which will, I hope, become more intelligible to the reader, when we have examined the sonnets, and have considered, in a subsequent chapter, the conditions under which Oxford seems to have written them, and also the plays.

The remaining poems of Chapman do not contain many references to Oxford; but I must here point out that the concluding lines of "The Amorous Zodiac" (1595):—

> Yet will I thee through all the world disperse;
> If not in heaven, amongst those braving fires,
> Yet here thy beauties, which the world admires,
> Bright as those flames shall glister in my verse—

seem to be imitated in, or from, the Shakesperean sonnet 61/21:—

> O let me, true in love, but truly write,
> And then, believe me, my love is as fair
> As any mother's child, though not so bright
> As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air.
> Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
> I will not praise that purpose not to sell—

the last couplet of which connects up, as we have seen, with the anti-Chapman passages of "Love's Labour's Lost."

Turning to Chapman's "De Guiana" (1596), it seems probable that the couplet:—

> Natures that stick in golden-gravell'd springs
> In muck-pits cannot 'scape their swallowings—

may be intended as an allusion to the sweet music of early Shakesperean, and more sensuous, verse, partly because it recalls the phrase, "golden foolery," of "The Shadow of Night," aimed, I believe, at the lyrical outbreaks of Richard II; but, more particularly, because Ver (a spring) is, as I have already noted, the latinized form of de Vere's family name.

The last poem of Chapman's, with which I shall deal,

is the set of verses appended to "Achilles Shield," a Homeric translation that appeared in 1598. The poem is dedicated to "My admired and soul-loved friend,[1] master of all essential and true knowledge, M. Harriots," and, though, even more than its companions, darkened by the shadows of that

> chaos whence this stifled verse
> By violence breaks

—as Chapman therein ingenuously describes the quality of his own poem—is, I believe, capable of interpretation, as a sustained attack upon Shakespeare. Many of the thrusts appear to be aimed directly at the later sonnets, written, as I shall shew, precisely at this date, and dealt with in my next chapter. To avoid repetition, therefore, I shall pass over, for the moment, the most important allusions in "Harriots," and comment here upon two only of its concluding passages. These lines :—

> And though to rhyme, and give a verse smooth feet,
> Uttering to vulgar palates passions sweet,
> Chance often in such weak capricious spirits
> As in nought else have tolerable merits—

have long been recognized, by Mr. Acheson and others, as, almost certainly, referring to Shakespeare ; the last-named commentator describing them as affording the only instance, that he knows, of any praise being accorded by Chapman to Shakespeare. With that statement I disagree, because, as I shewed conclusively, in my last book, Chapman in "Bussy d'Ambois," II, 2, undoubtedly praises, by secret implication, the lyrical qualities of "Twelfth Night," and in the same play, lauds with that sincerest flattery, close imitation, the metaphysical grandeurs of "Macbeth." That the passage from Harriots, above quoted, is aimed at Oxford-Shakespeare, I have no doubt whatever ; and so also, in my judgment, are the concluding lines of the poem, which run :—

[1] *Cf.* Albany's "Friends of my Soul," addressed to Kent (Oxford) and Edgar, in "King Lear," V, 3—a play probably drafted in this same year, 1598. See post p. 368.

the graces
Due to the mind' gifts, might embrue the faces
Of such as scorn them, and with tyrannous eye
Contemn the sweat of virtuous industry.
But as ill lines new fill'd with ink undried
An empty pen with their own stuff applied
Can blot them out: so shall their wealth-burst wombs
Be made with empty pen their honours tombs.

This passage is no less obscure than its fellows; but, in the light of preceding attacks upon Shakespeare himself, and upon the sonnets, which the next chapter will make clear, I hold that Chapman's concluding words, concerning "wealth-burst wombs," are aimed at Oxford, with his thousand a year from the secret service fund, and, perhaps, at other literary-minded aristocrats, such as the Earl of Derby, who seem also to have been concerned in this business of "penning plays for the common players," and for the common people. If any particular sonnet is here covertly alluded to, it would seem to be 98/55, which, as I shall shew, was written in 1598, the same year as "Harriots"; and with the tombs of Oxford's predecessors in the Earldom, almost certainly, in mind. It opens:—

Not marble nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme.

Concerning this chapter, readers will, I think, agree, that it forms a very strong link in my general chain of argument; and that its many, and indisputable, allusions to Shakesperean works, and to their author, both as writer and as actor, can be satisfactorily explained on no other hypothesis, than that the individual aimed at was the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford.

## CHAPTER VI

### OXFORD AND THE SHAKESPEREAN SONNETS

THE preceding chapters have shewn, conclusively, I hope, the intimate, though subterranean, connection traceable between the poems of Oxford, Shakespeare's "Venus," his "Lucrece," and many Shakesperean plays: and I may here add, that between Shakespeare's sonnets, and some of Oxford's, and of Lyly's, poems, there seems to exist an intimacy equally close; though, for brevity's sake, and because the parallels are similar, in quality and kind, to those with which my readers are already familiar, I will not go through them in detail here; but will content myself with extracting from Mr. Looney's edition of Oxford's poems, those sonnets for which he suggests comparison with de Vere's work. The following are the titles of the poems, as given in that edition, the numbers being the quarto numbers of the resembling sonnets of Shakespeare:—

| | |
|---|---|
| What Cunning Can Express. | 98, 99, 130. |
| Loss of Good Name. | 29, 71, 72, 81, 110-112, 121. |
| Revenge of Wrong. | 140, 147. |
| Care and Disappointment. | 142, 149. |
| Reason and Affection. | 147 and last set of sonnets. |
| Woman's Changeableness. | 20. |
| Song of Trico. | 29. |
| Old Melibeous. | 138. |

We will now examine the more meaningful of the Shakesperean sonnets; but before doing so, in some detail, I must briefly narrate, to my readers, the mysterious, and strangely significant, circumstances of their appearance, avoiding, as far as possible, ground that has been covered already in these pages.

On May 20, 1609, a book entitled, not "The Sonnets of William Shakespeare," but "Shake-speare's Sonnets," was published in quarto, in London, by T. T. (Thomas Thorpe), and dedicated as follows:—

To. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER. OF.
THESE INSUING. SONNETS.
Mr. W. H. ALL. HAPPINESSE.
AND. THAT ETERNITIE.
PROMISED.
BY.
OUR. EVER-LIVING. POET.
WISHETH.
THE. WELL-WISHING.
ADVENTURER. IN.
SETTING.
FORTH. T. T.

Now, concerning this dedication, I accept the opinion of the late Mrs. Stopes, that the word, "Begetter," does not refer to the inspirer, or composer, of the verses, but to the individual who "got the poems or collected them for the publisher." That person was Mr. W. H.—the identity of the publisher we will decide later—and, discarding, henceforth, as no longer tenable, in view of the evidences we now possess, the supposition that W. H. —as I once firmly believed—was Henry Wriothesely, Earl of Southampton, I accept, instead, the late Sir Sidney Lee's opinion, now shared by many others, that W. H. was a stationer, probably, William Hall; and I further accept Mrs. Stopes' suggestion, made in her biography of the Third Earl of Southampton, that, the phrase "all happinesse and that eternitie promised," etc., reads very like a wedding-wish, that W. H. may, through his descendants, acquire a portion of that "eternitie," which the poet, in many sonnets, promises to him who will beget children.

Now Col. B. R. Ward, whose book, "The Mystery of Mr. W. H.," is indispensable to all who would gain an intelligent understanding of the, hitherto, secret history of the sonnets, tells us (pp. 20, 21), how, having good reason to suppose that Mr. W. H. was a Hackney man, he visited that town, with notable results.

> The chance of finding William Hall was so slight that I very nearly contented myself with the extracts contained in the Library, but decided at last to go to the church, so as to satisfy my mind that everything possible had been done to find "Mr. W. H."
>
> I emphasize the fact that I went to find a definite individual to fit a particular case, because a successful find, under such circumstances, is more valuable as evidence than a chance discovery, for the reason that it tends to confirm the hypothesis on the strength of which the search was being conducted, namely, in this case, that *The Sonnets* had been found at King's Place, and that William Hall was a Hackney man. Judge, therefore, of my delight when I came across the following entry :—
>
> > William Hall and Margery Gryffyn were joyned in matrymonye on the 4th Aug. 1608—
>
> some nine months, that is, before the entry of "Shakespeare's Sonnets" upon the Stationer's Register.

But, the reader may pertinently ask, by what process of logical reasoning do you connect William Hall, of Hackney, with Mr. W. H. of the sonnets? The clue, I answer, is contained in the next words of the dedication, namely the reference to the poet, as "ever-living" —a form of words which, in my judgment, can bear but one interpretation; namely that, in 1609, the author of the sonnets was already dead. For suppose, by way of illustration, that a reader of this chapter has a well-known poet for husband; and that I write to her, describing him as "ever-living." Would not that lady be wholly justified in retorting :—"Why do you write to me, of my husband, as though he were dead?"; and

what answer could I return, except an apology, for having been careless in my use of language?

Now that the man who drafted that dedication, far from being careless, was assiduously careful in his choice of words, I shall soon bring evidence to shew.

Col. Ward, therefore, was justified in assuming, and in acting on the assumption, that the author of the sonnets was dead. But, it may be further asked, what evidence can you bring forward, connecting Lord Oxford with William Hall of Hackney? The answer is, that, as Capt. B. M. Ward has conclusively shewn, in his "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," it was to the neighbourhood of Hackney, that, from 1589 onwards, Edward de Vere, leaving, for ever, the court at which, hitherto, he had been so prominent a figure, withdrew into a privacy, from which, excepting upon a few rare, and special occasions, he seems never again to have emerged. From the day that he helped to "bear the canopy" over Queen Elizabeth, at the Armada celebration, on November 24, 1588,[1] a veil of mystery descends upon his life; but, though we have no certain knowledge, it seems more than probable that, provided as he was by the Queen, with the unprecedently large annuity of £1,000 per annum—equal, in purchasing power, to something like £15,000 of our money [2]—he devoted his time mainly to letters, and to the drama.

Two references to him, at about this time, make any other conclusion impossible; for Lord Lumley had written, in "The Arte of English Poetry" (1589):—

> For tragedy Lord Buckhurst and Master Edward Ferrys do deserve the highest price (? praise); the Earl of Oxford and Master Edwards of Her Majesty's Chapel for Comedy and Enterlude.

and also, in the same work

> And in Her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of Courtly makers (i.e. poets), Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majesty's own servants, who have

[1] See post pp. 176–178. [2] See post p. 146.

written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward Earl of Oxford.[1]

On December 2, 1591, the Earl alienated the ancestral home of the de Veres, Castle Hedingham, in Essex, near the Suffolk border, to his three daughters and Lord Burleigh, just about the time that—his first wife, Anne Cecil, having died in 1588—he contracted a second marriage, with one of the Queen's most beautiful Maids of Honour, Elizabeth Trentham, daughter of Sir Thomas Trentham, a Staffordshire landowner. The Earl, and his new Countess, settled in the village of Stoke Newington, just north of Shoreditch, and only a few minutes, on horseback, from the Shoreditch playhouses, The Theatre, and The Curtain, where was born to them on February 24, 1593, a son, Henry, who, in due course, was to succeed his father as the Eighteenth Earl of Oxford; these three individuals—father, mother and son—being, as I shall endeavour to shew, the author of the sonnets, and the two persons to whom they were principally addressed, namely the beautiful youth and the dark lady. It is curious that there exists no other instance of the name Henry occurring in the de Vere, Cecil, or Trentham families; and, remembering that Henry Wriothesley was a friend of Oxford's, and his successor, as royal ward, in Burleigh's household, it may well be that Col. Ward is right, in surmising that Henry de Vere was named after the Earl of Southampton.

The Earl and Countess of Oxford seem to have lived together, at Stoke Newington, until 1596, when, as we learn from Thomas' MS. "History of Hackney" (1832),[2] King's Place, now known as Brooke House, was

[1] *Cf.* also Francis Mere's in "Palladis Tamia" (1598): "The best for comedy among us be Edward Earl of Oxford." "Twelfth Night," transitional towards tragedy, was about of that date; the great Shakesperean tragedies beginning to appear with the turn of the century, after the Essex conspiracy. See Ward's "Oxford," pp. 178, 264.

[2] Quoted Ward's "Mystery of Mr. W. H." pp. 27, 28.

conveyed, by Anthony Radcliffe and others, to Elizabeth, Countess of Oxford, who lived there, with her husband, until his death in 1604, and did not leave it until 1609, when it was disposed of, with some 270 acres of land, to Fulke Greville, afterwards Lord Brooke.

But this year, 1609, be it noted, is the year of publication of the sonnets; and, in this connection, Col. Ward's discovery, already recorded, of William Hall's marriage, at Hackney, in 1608, links itself up, appositely, with the following facts. In 1586—one year after the passing of the Act of Parliament, which made guilty of treason any Roman Catholic priest, ordained since the first year of Elizabeth's reign, who should reside more than forty days in England—a Jesuit priest, Robert Southwell, landed in England, and was welcomed at Lord Vaux's house, at Hackney. After several years of fugitive life, under various aliases and disguises, he was arrested at Harrow, in 1592, and, after imprisonment at Westminster, and the Tower, was hanged at Tyburn, on February 21, 1595, the year of Lord Vaux's death, who had defended him at Hackney. Now, concerning the house occupied, until that year, by Lord Vaux, I quote here from the "History and Antiquities of the Parish of Hackney," by William Robinson, LL.D., F.S.A., 1842.[1]

> "This Lord Vaux was for many years confined as a suspect person within a certain distance from London; and it is conjectured that he hired a residence at Hackney (probably Brooke House), which is confirmed from the circumstance of his house at Hackney being mentioned several times in a book printed in 1603 . . . entitled, 'A Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures.'"[2]

It seems probable, therefore, that Brooke House was the harbour, in which Southwell sought refuge, in 1586; and Southwell was long supposed to be the author of "A Foure-Fold Meditation," which was "imprinted at

[1] Quoted Col. Ward's "Mystery of Mr. W. H.," p. 13.
[2] For connection with "King Lear," see post p. 344.

London by G. Eld; for Francis Burton, 1606," and dedicated in these words, "To the Right-Worship full and Vertous Gentleman, Matthew Saunders, Esquire W. H. wisheth, with long life a prosperous achievement of his good desires." And the preface, signed "W. H.," contains this sentence: "Long have they lien hidden in obscuritie, and happily had never seen the light, had not a mere accident convayed them to my hands."

Now all this is very significant and interesting, because the printer of this poem, was also, three years later, the printer of the sonnets, and the "W. H.," therefore, seems, almost certain, to be the same "W. H.," otherwise William Hall, who was the "onelie begetter" of those poems: nor will the alert reader fail to notice that the circumstances mentioned by W. H., in which "a mere accident conveyed them to my hands," curiously resemble the apparently similar "accidental" circumstances, in which the sonnets—also discovered, as seems probable, in the same house—came first to light, and thus to publication.[1] Commenting upon these facts, in an article on "The Authorship of a Fourefold Meditation," in the April, 1929, number of "The Review of English Studies," H. J. L. Robbie, the author of the article, writes as follows:—

> The Foure-fold Meditations was therefore given to the world by an unscrupulous stationer, who unblushingly admitted that his edition was pirated, and even sought commendation for that very reason. He ascribed it to Robert Southwell, a notorious Jesuit, whose literary work was famous and much applauded.

This brings us to another interesting point in our story; for Mr. Robbie, in this article, proves that the "Meditation" was not written by Southwell, as Col. Ward, in his "Mystery of Mr. W. H.," supposed, but

[1] The first connection of the Stratford actor with Oxford probably came about through Richard Field, son of a tanner of Stratford-on-Avon. Field had printed "Venus and Adonis" in 1593. It is a most significant fact that no edition of the sonnets was published between 1609 and 1640.

by Oxford's cousin, Philip, Earl of Arundel.[1] Thus Mr. Robbie.

> To whom do the MSS. ascribe the poem? MS. Rawl. poet., 219, states that its author was "Phillippe, Earle of Arundell," & that it was composed "after his attainder." The Crowcombe MS. also gives it to Arundel and dates it Christmas, 1587, at Westminster, whither Arundel was taken from the tower. . . . Two of the four MSS. thus ascribe the poem to Arundel; one of these two contains other works certainly by the Earl; none suggests any other author. Why did "W. H." ascribe it to "R. *S.*," *the author of* "*St. Peter's Complaint*"? His aim was very obviously to secure a large circulation for the poem, and increase his profits.[2] By 1606 the memory of Arundel would almost be forgotten. Not so that of Southwell, whose works were still popular.

What conclusions are we to draw from these very curious facts? My own, in which, no doubt, Col. Ward will wholly concur, is that both MSS.—the "Meditations," by Oxford's cousin, Arundel, and the Shakesperean sonnets, by Oxford himself—were obtained by Hall from Brooke House, either with, or without, the knowledge and permission of the widowed Countess, who lived there, as we have seen until 1609. Arundel's work was, admittedly, acquired by "a mere accident"; and the sonnets may have come to light in the same way; it being quite possible that the Countess, clearing up before departure, found the MS. of her late husband's poems, and handed them to Hall; in which case, she can hardly have known much of their contents; because, if my theory be correct, she herself, as the original of the "dark lady," is therein written of with anger and contempt. Certainly the chaotic order in which they were published, shews that, contemporary writings though they were, their meaning and significance can

[1] Cousin of Charles Arundel, the slanderer. For connection with plot and character of "As You Like It," see post pp. 264, 265.

[2] I think that his motive was much more probably prudence than greed.

hardly have been much plainer to Hall, and to their editor, than they have been, hitherto, to us.

This may be no more than surmise; but it all fits in, very closely indeed, with what we know of the proven facts, as well as with other circumstances, and conjectures, which these pages will, in due course, reveal;—such, for example, as the fact that, immediately upon Oxford's retirement from court, somewhere about 1590, and his withdrawal to north London, provided with the large annuity of £1,000 a year from the queen,[1] the first acknowledged Shakesperean publications commence; Shakespeare's name first appearing in English literature, with the dedication of "Venus and Adonis," in 1593, following upon Robert Greene's attack on "Shake-scene," in 1592; the name "William Shakespeare" first appearing upon a play, "Love's Labour's Lost," in 1598; and the whole first period of Shakesperean publication (1593–1604) corresponding, almost exactly, with that of Oxford's retired life at Hackney. Further, as Col. Ward has not failed to point out,[2] this period of rummaging in Brooke House, previous to its evacuation, and the winding up of Lord Oxford's affairs, synchronizes with another period of, apparently, unauthorized, and piratical, Shakesperean publication, including "King Lear," "Troilus and Cressida," and "Pericles," of the first of which Sir Sidney Lee held, that it "followed a badly transcribed playhouse copy, and abounds in gross typographical errors," and, of the second, that it is "obviously stolen wares"; though, personally, I agree with Col. Ward that "Lear" and "Troilus," while undoubtedly pirated, may also have suffered from the careless handling of MSS. not, at first, regarded as being of any particular value. As for "Pericles," I have shewn, in Chapter IX of my "Shakespeare, Jonson and Wilkins as Borrowers," that it is, almost certainly, an

[1] Ward's "Life of Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," p. 299. See also post pp. 206–210.

[2] "Mystery of Mr. W. H.," pp. 42, 43.

imitated hotch-potch, by Wilkins, from various Shakesperean plays, and was intended to be passed off as the work of the master, who, if this book be trustworthy, had died in 1604, but for whose plays, written under a pseudonym, there was still a great popular demand.

At this point, I must pause, to notice another profoundly interesting, and significant, circumstance connected with the publication of the sonnets; namely, that the editor to whom William Hall entrusted them, was, it seems, none other than Francis Bacon. Here, certain of my readers having already pricked up their ears, let me hasten to assure them that I am only a Baconian in a very limited sense. I do not believe that Francis Bacon was, substantially, the author of a single play usually attributed to Shakespeare, with the possible exception of "The Tempest"; but I do believe, and shall bring further strong evidence to shew, that Bacon seems to have been the secret editor of many Shakesperean works, including the First Folio of 1623. At the moment, however, I am concerned only with the sonnets; and, since neither space, nor my own knowledge, permit me to go deeply into the subject, I will refer my readers, at once, to a recent, and illuminating, book, "Shakespeare's Sonnets Unmasked," by Mr. Bertram G. Theobald, wherein the author shews, beyond dispute, that by the use of three quite simple ciphers, designated by him S, R and K, of which the first is the elementary one, A = 1, B = 2, etc., and the second is its reverse, Z = 1, Y = 2, and so forth—the third being only slightly more complex—Bacon has written his own, and, apparently, other signatures into the title page of the sonnets, of which the first five lines read as follows, with S standing for the simple cipher, R for its reverse, and K for the third, and more complex, one.

TO. THE. ONLIE. BEGETTER OF.
in R = Francis Bacon Knight.
THESE. INSUING. SONNETS.
in K = Francis Bacon Knight.
Mr. W. H. ALL. HAPPINESSE.
in K = Bacon Shakespeare.
AND THAT. ETERNITIE.
in S = Francis Bacon Knight.
PROMISED.
in K = F. Bacon Knight.

For these surprising, not to say astonishing, results, we owe warm thanks to the ingenious discoverer, who thus, for the first time, so far as I am aware, makes clear one aspect, at least, of this mysterious, and, hitherto, baffling page.[1] For years past I have observed, and have been intrigued by, the clumsy and artificial wording of this page; but, wholly ignorant, as I am, of the craft of cipher-writing, have not suspected the truth, now brought to light by Mr. Theobald, that the apparent clumsiness of the inscription is due to the fact that every line of page was to be worked, somehow, into a cipher: and the five lines quoted above are enough to shew that Bacon was, somewhere, in some way, behind the sonnets, and intended that posterity should know it. For, as the discoverer of these cipher signatures has justly remarked, they can hardly, by any conceivable sequence of happy fortuities, be due wholly to chance; but, on the contrary, must have been prepared with great cunning, and much practised skill. Those who vehemently deny that Bacon had any concern with the works of Shakespeare, must face the problem as best they can.

At this point, however, I am, perhaps, able to expand, a little, Mr. Theobald's work; and that in a very remarkable way. It must be evident to all who will

[1] It must not be inferred that I accept other portions of Mr. Theobald's book, which I have not studied. But as regards this dedicating page of the sonnets, he seems to have made out his case, on pp. 29-40.

consider this page, as a series of number-ciphers, that the crucial line of them all is No. 7—"OUR EVER LIVING POET"—since we should expect the planner of the page to reveal by cipher, behind those words, the name of the actual author of the sonnets. Now Mr. Theobald writes, of that line, that in R it equals 205; a solution which, he adds, "would involve too much discussion and illustration to be included here." In other words, the crucial line escapes him, unless by some far-fetched, and, therefore, dubious method of figuring.

Mr. Theobald, however, as a convinced Baconian, did not, I imagine, experiment very far outside that name; but Col. Ward, fully alive to the significance of Mr. Theobald's failure—if I may so style it without unfairness—began himself to experiment, and soon perceived that line 7, in K, totals up to 376, and that 376, in the same cipher, spells also

THE EARLE OF OXFORD.

Now, while laying claim to no skill whatever, in these matters, this result seems to me to be quite as good a cipher reading, as are those which I had already accepted from Mr. Theobald, who, nevertheless, utterly repudiates Col. Ward's result, upon the ground that Bacon never ciphered his name with a "The" at the head of it. The author of "Shakesperean Sonnets Unmasked" fails, however, to state why Bacon should not thus have ciphered the Earl of Oxford's name; seeing that Oxford himself seems to have signed his well known, and intensely personal, and biographical "Echo" poem thus—"The Earle of Oxforde," as shewn on page 3 of Mr. Looney's edition—a form of signature differing by one letter only—an additional "E"—from the signature suggested by Col. Ward. In my judgment, therefore, Mr. Theobald's repudiation fails; and I regard Col. Ward's discovery as a genuine, and extremely important, vindication of the general theories set forth in this book.

Here, for the moment, we leave Bacon's connection with the sonnets and plays, until it crops up again, in a subsequent chapter; and, having explained, as fully as present knowledge permits, the circumstances of the appearance of the sonnets, I must now examine the sonnets themselves, in their relation to Oxford; first pausing, for a moment, to consider what I hold to be a vitally important discovery, already mentioned—that of the rhyme-linked sonnet order, as revealed by Sir Denys Bray's book, first published in 1925.[1]

When one recalls the admitted fact, that the rhyme-link; far from being unknown in Shakespeare's time, was an accepted, conventional device of the Elizabethan sonnet-sequence, used, for example, by Oxford's rival, literary and other, Philip Sidney, in "Astrophel and Stella" (1591), and by Daniel, in his "Delia," of the same year, it seems an astonishing fact—and one that provides, unquestionably, another proof of the weakness of modern academic Elizabethan scholarship—that Shakespeare's acceptance, and utilization, of this convention should have been overlooked for more than three hundred years; but, as Sir Thomas Browne pointed out, long ago, those twin Goliaths of Authority, and Received Opinion, have ever been among the greatest enemies of human knowledge—a fact which explains why so many genuine, and deeply enlightening, Shakesperean discoveries, of recent years—including the Baconian cipher-signatures in the sonnets, to which I have just called attention—have come from men, who, because they are outside the narrower academic traditions, have dared to bring to their researches courageous imaginations, wholly independent of any conventional or time-honoured beliefs. One of these is Sir Denys Bray; and it is to him that we owe our present knowledge, that the 154 sonnets of Shakespeare, which have come down to us, are not merely—as the world was already, in part, aware—a purposed sequence of theme-

[1] "The Original Order of Shakespeare's Sonnets" (Methuen).

grouped verses, but are also connected, by rhyming word-links, and awakening echoes, all interwoven with a texture of rhythmic musical sounds, that bring whole passages together, into patterns pleasing, at once, to mind and ear; as when, through sonnet after sonnet, rhyming upon his own pen-name, the poet plays with the words "still" and "will." [1]

I will now take the reader through some of the sonnets, pointing out, as we come to them, such lines as fit in with the probability that Oxford was, in fact, their author, and lingering awhile over such passages as, in my judgment, cannot possibly be explained upon any other assumption. Let me begin by stating that a recent close re-reading of them has convinced me of the truth of the theory, first advanced by Col. B. R., and Capt. B. M. Ward, that the sonnets, dedicated, as we have seen, to William Hall, the stationer of Hackney, were written, not to any of Shakespeare's mistresses, but to his second wife, and to his, and her, only son, Henry, whose mother, therefore, was the "dark lady."

This domestic view of the poems is, of course, no altogether new idea; for in an unpublished pamphlet written by himself, "Shakespeare's Sonnets—an Essay in Interpretation," with which Col. Ward has supplied me, he quotes, as follows, from John Benson, who brought out a second edition of the sonnets in 1640.

> I here presume (under favour) to present to your view, some excellent and sweetely composed Poems, of Master William Shakespeare, Which in themselves appeare of the same purity the Author himselfe then living avouched.

If, as I suppose, Benson here means moral purity, in subject and handling, the inference, very naturally applicable to the circumstances of Oxford's life, may be that the sonnets, from their first appearance, were supposed, or were slanderously asserted to be, improper

[1] See, in addition to "The Original Order of Shakespeare's Sonnets," an article, "The Art-form of the Elizabethan Sonnet Sequence and Shakespeare's Sonnets," by Sir Denys Bray, in the Shakespeare Yahrbuch (Leipzig, 1927).

in subject,[1] though Benson himself knew better. Concerning the suggestion that the poems were addressed to a baby boy, Col. Ward's theory, again, is not altogether a new one; for he writes:—

> "Mr. S. Smith Travers, in 1881, published a pamphlet entitled Shakespeare's Sonnets. To Whom were they Addressed? He thought that the 'fair youth' was an illegitimate son of the poet, by a noble or high-born lady"—

a suggestion which, so far as the mother's social rank is concerned, comes very near to our own theory. Continuing, Col. Ward writes:—

> Mr. David Masson in his "Shakespeare Personally," published in 1914, thought that when Polixenes, King of Bohemia, in "The Winter's Tale" described . . . his fondness for his little boy, he was voicing the feeling of Shakespeare himself:—
>
> If at home, sir,
> He's all my exercise, my mirth, my matter;
> Now my sworn friend, and then mine enemy:
> My parasite, my soldier, statesman, all:
> He makes a July's day short as December;
> And with his varying childness cures in me
> Thoughts that would thick my blood.
>
> "Do we not," says Mr. Masson, "more than seem to see Shakespeare remembering his own fire-side and his play and prattle there once, with his dead boy, Hamnet?"

That boy, however, in Col. Ward's judgment, as also in my own, was not dead Hamnet, but living Henry de Vere, afterwards Eighteenth Earl of Oxford, born February 24, 1593: yet Masson, nevertheless, was, in principle, very near to the truth; and, now that the reader has the clue, a careful perusal of the sonnets, in the new rhyme-linked order, will, I think, solve for him, at last, the mystery that Masson well expressed when he wrote:—

[1] Many readers will recall instances in which a first perusal of the sonnets, in the quarto order, had led to a strong suspicion of gross moral obliquity in their author.

How the sonnets came to be published no one knows; but in the state in which they *were* published they have come down to us like a barred antique jewel chest, which no key has been found to fit, and so long left aside that it has been covered with cobweb.

How the sonnets came to be published, this chapter has already plausibly surmised; and now, provided with both duster and key, we will endeavour to unlock the chest and reveal its secret. Sonnet 1/20 runs: [1]

A Woman's face with Nature's own hand painted
Hast thou, the master-mistress of my passion;
A woman's gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false woman's fashion;
An eye more bright than theirs, less false in rolling,
Gilding the object whereupon it gazeth;
A man in hue, all hues [2] in his controlling,
Which steals men's eyes and women's souls amazeth,
And for a woman wert thou first created;
Till nature, as she wrought thee, fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing.
But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.

The Earl, who had three daughters by his first wife, but no son, is delighted at the birth of an heir to the Earldom:—

Henrye, Vicount Bulbecke sonne to the right honourable Edw. Vere Earle of Oxford was borne the XXIIIIth of february 1592 [3] and christened the XXXIst day of March in the yere 1593. (Parish Register of Stoke Newington.)

[1] In every instance the first number is that of the new rhyme-linked order; the second number that of the quarto edition of 1609.

[2] The New English Dictionary, gives following obsolete meanings for the substantive, "hue," viz., "Form, shape, figure, appearance, aspect, species." It was occasionally spelt "hew," e.g. H. More, 1653; the modern reading "hue," introduced to make sense of the line, only confuses the meaning of a passage which, coming in the first sonnet of the series, is alone almost enough to give the "baby boy" theory.

[3] Old style. See Col. Ward's "Mystery of Mr. W. H.," pp. 26, 27. J. A. Fort dated the early sonnets 1593.

It is remarkable that the first words of the first sonnet, "A woman's face," at once recall the somewhat womanish quality of the Earl's own face, as revealed in the well-known portrait belonging to the Earl of Portland; and a number of contemporary references to de Vere's womanish qualities have been mentioned in a previous chapter,[1] as, for instance, when the rival poet, Chapman, bitterly attacking Oxford, in "A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy" (1595), denounces

> the weak disjoint
> Of female humours; nor the Protean rages
> Of pied-faced fashion. . . . . .

Corroborative evidence of the feminine quality of Oxford's physiognomy, and expression, is afforded by a remark made to the writer, by a highly intelligent woman journalist, who, when first shewn a reproduction of the above-mentioned portrait, exclaimed: "What a very womanish face!" The bitter wording of the line concerning "false woman's fashion," recalls Hamlet, and echoes exactly the sentiment of Oxford's song, "Woman's Changeableness":—[2]

> If women could be fair and yet not fond,
> Or that their love were firm not fickle, still,
> I would not marvel that they make men bond,
> By service long to purchase their good will.

The last lines of Shakespeare's first sonnet,

> But since she prick'd thee out for women's pleasure,
> Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure,

may refer, I take it, to the necessary dominion of women over babyhood, and their unfailing delight in waiting upon the needs of infancy.

The opening lines of the second sonnet (2/91)—"Some glory in their birth," etc., considered as written by a father to a son, and as cataloguing, at the same time, the pleasures in which men delight, seems to reveal the

[1] See ante pp. 99, 115.

[2] See J. T. Looney's edition of "The Poems of Edward de Vere," p. 37.

mind of one who has been accustomed, throughout life, to "glory" in those things which wealth and high social position have brought most closely to his experience—"birth," "skill," "wealth," "body's force,"—as expressed, for example, in martial exercises,—"new-fangled garments," "hawks," "hounds," and "horses." To Oxford, one of the best dancers, horsemen, and jousters at court; and, admittedly addicted, in youth, to a somewhat fantastic fashion in dress, all these were familiar and to him they all apply: the man of Stratford, on the contrary, can hardly have known any of them, saving, perhaps, skill, and, it may be, body's force; since all the others are the privileges of rank and wealth. I suggest, further, that the couplet,

> Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' cost,
> Of more delight than hawks or horses be—

expresses, again, the thought of one who has known intimately, in experience, rather than in imagination, the delights of such things. Sonnet 3/25 continues the same line of thought, namely that de Vere, himself the bearer of two of the proudest titles in the land, those of Earl of Oxford, and Lord Great Chamberlain of England, out of favour with his stars, which, being auspicious, might have borne him to public triumph, is now, by Fortune's frown, "from the book of honour razed quite," retired from court,[1] and reduced, under cloak of anonymity, to write sonnets for his son, and plays for posterity. Nevertheless, he finds here a quiet happiness, in the boy's requited love, and in the tranquillity of a home,

> Where I may not remove nor be remov'd.

The poet sees, in the beloved boy, a living symbol of all the world's best beauties—of the perfect man, in Adonis; of the perfect woman, in "Helen's cheek"; of incarnate nature, at her loveliest, in "the spring and foison of the year." Following him attend a "million

[1] He had retired from court by 1590. See ante pp. 141, 142.

shadows " of those graces, that, matching him in outward perfection, have not achieved his " constant heart." Gazing upon these beauties (6/62), which himself has fathered, and in which he sees resemblance to his own person, in youth, the Earl falls into the vanity of strong approval of his own face and form; until a glance into the mirror reveals the painful fact, that the face there reflected is no longer young, nor fair, but, instead, is

Beated and chopp'd with tanned antiquity.

Yet, upon further consideration, the father (7/22) rejects the mirror's persuasion, that he is old; since, living in, and for, that son, he cannot be older than his other self; and, upon that thought, glorying, not only in his boy, but also, as every poet may, in his power to celebrate lyrically the object of his love, the father breaks out into that loveliest of all the world's rhapsodies (8/18)—

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

wherein, in " eternal lines," he gives eternal life to the being he has brought into the world.

Time passes; and the poet sees, in imagination, the results of that inexorable march. Now the boy (9/126), " by waning grown," has lost a part of the perfection of babyhood; while his " lovers," or, in other words, his parents, growing older, are " withering as thy sweet self grows't," and falling, inevitably, toward " time's decay." One comfort only, one only way of escape, can the father find, from this fearful meditation " :—

O, none! unless this miracle have might,
That in black ink my love may still shine bright.

That the miracle still magically operates, this book, among many others, bears witness. Meanwhile, as Time, the inexorable, " takes from " the young Earl to be, his father's pen will " engraft him new " (11/15).

This brings us to sonnet 12/16, the commencement of a series of five, in which the poet envisages, for his son,

a second, and "more blessed," path to immortality, even, than in his father's verse; namely, by a marriage, that shall perpetuate both himself, and the earldom. The fact that this sonnet opens with the word "but," shews that the marriage theme could not have been the opening motive of the sequence. Thomas Thorpe, or, more probably, Francis Bacon himself,[1] in the quarto of 1609, made sonnet 15/54 from this group, beginning—

> From fairest creatures we desire increase
> That thereby beauty's rose might never die—

the opening poem of the whole series; and we are all so accustomed to reading those lines, immediately after the dedication to "Mr. W. H.," that we naturally suppose them to have been addressed to a youth of marriageable age, instead of to a child, whom the father sees, in imagination only, as a young man. That this was Shakespeare's meaning, however, there can, I think, be no doubt whatever; since the second quatrain of this sonnet (12/16)—

> Now stand you on the top of happy hours,
> And many maiden gardens, yet unset,
> With virtuous wish would bear you living flowers
> Much liker than your painted counterfeit—

shows, unmistakably, that the poet is writing for a boy, whose future wife is, as yet, a baby girl. Who, he argues, would be that thriftless thing, a single man?—more especially when that man was fathered by the world's supreme genius among poets, and was natural successor to one of England's proudest and most ancient inheritances (13/13):—

> O none but unthrifts, dear my love, you know
> You had a father; let your son say so.

With sonnet 16/2, Oxford touches a more biographical note. The verse runs:—

[1] See ante p. 147. It should be remembered, in this connection, that William Hall published Bacon's Essays in 1612.

When forty winters shall beseige thy brow
And dig deep trenches in thy beauty's field,
Thy youth's proud livery, so gaz'd on now,
Will be a tatter'd weed, of small worth held;
Then being ask'd where all thy beauty lies,
Where all the treasure of thy lusty days,
To say, within thine own deep-sunken eyes,
Were an all-eating shame and thriftless praise.
How much more praise deserv'd thy beauty's use,
If thou could'st answer "This fair child of mine
Shall sum my count and make my old excuse,"
Proving his beauty by succession thine!
This were to be new made when thou art old,
And see thy blood warm when thou feel'st it cold.

This sonnet forms an integral part of the case for Oxford, as their author. The Earl, born in 1550, was forty-three, at the time of his son's birth in 1593; soon after which, I suppose, he wrote the above quoted lines;[1] whereas the Stratford actor, born in 1564, would be only 32.

That Oxford's own first experience of marriage had not been a happy one, a very short perusal of Captain Ward's "Life of the Earl" will be sufficient to shew; and this second alliance of his, also—whereof the beloved son is born—was destined to turn later, as we shall see, towards storm and disaster. What wonder, then, that a mind so apprehensive, introspective, foreboding, and ultra-imaginative, as Shakespeare's, glorying in a prospective future for his son, that shall be blissful, and also abiding, is soon, and vividly, confronted with the problem:—"Suppose that he should refuse to marry!"—an idea promptly voiced, in sonnet after sonnet, of warning to the boy, lest, by remaining single, he should repeat the fault, so often charged against the father, of "ruinating," instead of repairing, the "beauteous roof" (19/10), of Hedingham Castle,[2] or any other symbol by

[1] Sir Israel Gollancz, in his Temple Edition, puts the dates of the sonnets approximately from 1595-1598. I put them from 1593 to about 1600.

[2] Oxford was often accused of ruining the family estate. See

which the reader may choose to represent the ancestral glories of the Earls of Oxford. Better ten children than none, writes the eager father, in an age when large families were less burdensome than now (22/6) :—

> Be not self-willed, for thou art much too fair
> To be death's conquest and make worms thine heir.

The opening line of sonnet 23/8—

> Music to hear, why hear'st thou music sadly ?—

reminding one of Jessica's,

> I am never merry when I hear sweet music—

seems to suggest that the boy had been saddened by music, an art in which Oxford himself, unquestionably, took extreme delight ; [1] and the poet, rhyming upon the concord of the strings, takes occasion happily to compare such concord with his own too brief experience of domestic harmony :—

> Resembling sire and child and happy mother,
> Who, all in one, one pleasing note do sing—

and to pay, in sonnet 24/3, a compliment to the beautiful woman, whom—though not, it would seem, for her ultimate happiness—he had brought from Elizabeth's court, to be the wife of the greatest poet of all time—

> Thou art thy mother's glass, and she in thee
> Calls back the lovely April of her prime.

Writing thus, the father sees his son nestling in the mother's arms. Then, through sonnet after sonnet, of marvellous richness and beauty, with his imagination perpetually ranging from the present, back over papers "yellow'd with their age" (25/17), and harmonious with "the stretched metre of an antique song," the Earl laments the evanescence of physical beauty, in lines that

Ward's Life, pp. 386-387, and Chapman's "Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois," I, 1, where Baligny, almost certainly referring to Oxford, says "Not . . . consuming birthrights in apishness and envy of attire."

[1] Ward's "Oxford," p. 203, 204.

recall vividly, here and there, the language of the plays, as these, from 26/12 :—

> Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
> And die as fast as they see others grow,

reminding us, at once, of Viola, to Orsino, who is, in part, Oxford himself :—

> Alas, that they are so,
> To die, even when they to perfection grow.

Always, at the back of his mind, hovers the dominant thought, that Nature's waste may be annulled only by getting a son (27/7) :—

> Lo, in the orient when the gracious light
> Lifts up his burning head, each under eye
> Doth homage to his new-appearing sight,
> Serving with looks his sacred majesty ;
> And having climbed the steep-up heavenly hill,
> Resembling strong youth in his middle age,
> Yet mortal looks adore his beauty still,
> Attending on his golden pilgrimage ;
> But when from highmost pitch, with weary car,
> Like feeble age, he reeleth from the day,
> The eyes, 'fore duteous, now converted are
> From this low tract, and look another way.
> So thou, thyself out-going in thy noon,
> Unlook'd on diest, unless thou get a son.

Here, however, concurrently with the question of his son's future fatherhood, Shakespeare's mind seems to be returning, in imagination, to that fruitful Italian journey, of 1575–76, that lured him as far as to Palermo ; [1] during which he saw, for the first time, " steep-up heavenly hills," of mountain rank, and drew near enough, the while, to the Orient, to sense keenly, though still from afar, those exotic charms which the genius of Italy is orientalized enough, in some degree, to reflect and recall.[2] This suggestion of mine may seem ultra-

[1] Ward's " Oxford," pp. 111, 112.

[2] See post sonnet 66/33, where the mountain and sunlight motives are repeated.

fanciful, to certain readers; but it is borne out by the sequel; for an Italian journey would naturally suggest memories of painting, to any art-loving mind; and the next sonnet (28/24) shews that Oxford's fancy is turning that way, when he writes,

> Mine eye hath played the painter, and hath stell'd
> Thy beauty's form in table of my heart;
> My body is the frame wherein 'tis held,
> And perspective it is best painter's art;
> For through the painter must you see his skill,
> To find where your true image pictur'd lies,
> Which in my bosom's shop is hanging still.[1] . . .

Here the sonneteer seems distinctly to recall those workshops of Italian painters, among whose lures one can imagine Oxford delightedly lingering, with resultant change of metaphor, here, from one of musical harmony, and "the stretched metre of an antique song," to the discord existing between the eye, which, drawing what it sees, paints the physical beauties of his son, and the mind, that, picturing inward beauties, which hearts only can feel and discern, finds itself, straightway, "at mortal war" (29/46) with its rival, upon the question "how to divide" equally their conquests.

At last, however, the pair come to terms; and between them "a league is took," whereby it is agreed that each, in turn, shall supply the other's want; the heart feasting the eye upon "love's picture," and the eye, as occasion arises, bidding the heart to the "painted banquet" of beauty (30/47). In sonnet 28/24 it is interesting to notice another of the several examples occurring, hereabouts, of phrases, or turns of expression, which seem to be echoed in the plays; such, for example, as "eyes for eyes," reminding one of the "palm to palm," that, in Juliet's pretty simile, is "holy palmer's kiss."

With the lines in sonnets 31/75, concerning the miser,

[1] The well-known portrait of Oxford, in possession of the Duke of Portland, was probably painted at Paris, when the Earl was there in the spring of 1575.

at war with his wealth—because, like a modern plutocrat, he fears lest a too "filching age" shall steal his treasure—we reach a couple of poems (32/52 and 33/68), in which the themes of cheated riches, and concealed identity, are together rhymed upon.

> So am I as the rich, whose blessed key
> Can bring him to his sweet up-locked treasure.

Here the hidden wealth is his son, whom, at will, he can summon from the nursery, to triumph over, and to adore; or, the boy being absent, can, at least, hope for; but, beneath that motive, there lies hidden, in 33/68, the analagous, though subtler, thought, expressed in the opening lines:—

> How careful was I, when I took my way,
> Each trifle under truest bars to thrust—

where, I take it, once more, with the Italian journey of 1576 still, very possibly, in mind, the poet darkly hints at the precautions he has taken, and will take, to conceal, step by step—though with occasional lapse into carelessness—any clues that might reveal an identity, which, nevertheless, after 300 years, is coming, at last, to light.

Sonnets 34/37—numbered 50, 51, 44, and 45, in the quarto of 1609—can be summed up in the sentence, that absence from his boy makes all the poet's grief, and all his desire; but their major interest lies, perhaps, in the echoes they bring of Oxford's earlier poems, and in the further reminders, they furnish, of the mature plays, that, already, at this very time, are beginning to take permanent shape. The line in 35/51—

> Then should I spur though mounted on the wind—

is suggestive of Macbeth's,

> Horsed upon the sightless couriers of the air;

and the lines;—

> Then can no horse with my desire keep pace;
> Therefore desire, of perfect'st love being made—

together with a reference to desire, in sonnet 37/45,

affords another instance of Oxford's frequent occupation with this theme, as expressed in three poems, "The Meeting with Desire," "What is Desire?" and "Fond Desire," all of which appear in Mr. Looney's edition of Oxford's poems.[1] The wistfulness underlying such longings, brings us, of course, very close to the Hamlet theme, which, however, is most clearly expressed in the opening line of sonnet 36/44 :—

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought—

recalling,

Nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so.

The lively nimbleness of those "quicker elements," thought and desire, are here dominant in the poet's mind; and it may well be that, by a quite characteristic rebound of the fancy, from grave to gay, he drew Sir Toby's line :—

Doth not our life consist of the four elements?—

from this sonnet, and, particularly, from the words, "Our life being made of four."

With sonnet 38 of the new order, or xxvii of the old, Oxford's thought turns from travel of body, to travel of mind :—

Weary with toil I haste me to my bed,
The dear repose for limbs with travel tir'd;
But then begins a journey in my head,
To work my mind, when body's work's expir'd.

and, therewith, the metaphor, still harping upon the beloved boy, turns for four sonnets, 38/41,[2] upon motives of day and night, which promptly recall close parallels, of image and expression, in "Romeo and Juliet," a couple that, as I hope to shew, later on, are, originally, Oxford himself, and his second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, the "happy mother" of verses that we have been considering; and the "dark lady" of sonnets that lie ahead. Here are the parallels.

[1] pp. 7-11. [2] 27, 43, 61 and 28, quarto order.

| SONNETS. | ROMEO AND JULIET. |
| --- | --- |
| 38/27<br>My soul's imaginary sight<br>Presents thy shadow to my sightless view,<br>Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night,<br>Makes black night beauteous and her old face new. | ROMEO. Her beauty hangs upon the brow of night<br>Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear.<br>(*Rom. & Jul.*, I, 5.) |
| 39/43<br>All days are nights to see till I see thee,<br>And nights bright days when dreams do shew thee me. | JULIET. Come, gentle night, come loving black-brow'd night,<br>Give me my Romeo. |
| 40/61<br>For thee I watch whilst thou dost wake elsewhere | |
| 41/28<br>So flatter I the swart-complexion'd night,<br>When sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st the even.<br>But day doth daily draw my sorrows longer, | JULIET. Take him and cut him out in little stars,<br>And he will make the face of heaven so fine,<br>That all the world will be in love with night<br>(*Rom. & Jul.*, III, 2.) |

Here the parallels, whether of thought or expression, are strangely close; both versions, including the typical Hamlet motive, namely that, just as he, Oxford himself, and his " wounded name," go down together to death—leaving behind them, to his son, immortality, and a lasting monument of gentle verse—so Hamlet, also, passing from this world, has beside him a Horatio, pledged to

> report me and my cause aright
> To the unsatisfied.

The princely dramatist passes; but his works, and himself expressed in them, remain behind.

No whit less significant is 45/66 :—

> Tired with all these, for restful death I cry.
> As, to behold desert a beggar born,
> And needy nothing trimmed in jollity,
> And purest faith unhappily forsworn,

And gilded honour shamefully misplac'd,
And maiden virtue rudely strumpeted,
And right perfection wrongfully disgrac'd,
And strength by limping sway disabled,
And art made tongue-tied by authority,
And folly, doctor-like, controlling skill,
And simple truth miscall'd simplicity,
And captive good attending captain ill.
Tir'd with all these, from these would I be gone,
Save that, to die, I leave my love alone.[1]

Here, in a sense, we have, almost, a pageant of the plays, in general; or from a more personal view-point, an earlier version of Hamlet's "To be or not to be" soliloquy, in which, as also in this sonnet, he longs for deliverance, by death, from the long catalogue of the woes, that follow upon "the whips and scorns of time." In view of the powerful arguments, as I regard them, to be advanced in the next chapter—seeking to shew that Oxford, and Bacon, were, for many years, at the head of an influential, though secret, government committee, entrusted with the production of plays, written and staged with a principal object, of sustaining national courage and patriotism, throughout the interminable Spanish War—it is interesting to discover here a reference to the disadvantages of

Art made tongue-tied by authority—

—a sentence which, though not otherwise easily comprehensible, takes on, when thus regarded, a quite natural, and wholly pertinent, meaning and significance.

With sonnets 46/49 in the rhyme-linked order—71, 32, 72, and 103 in the quarto—upon such lines as :—

No longer mourn for me when I am dead,

and,

Do not so much as my poor name rehearse,

[1] *Cf.* Oxford's poem, "Were I a King," on p. 38 of Mr. Looney's edition. There, as in this sonnet, you get the same trick of resemblance between first and last lines, the same wistful or morbid longing for death. His rival, Sidney's, answer is also significant, seeing how often Shakespeare attacked him.

the poet touches again the typically morbid, mysterious, Oxfordian note, of deep abasement and despondency. Apparently, to judge by (47/32) :—

> Had my friend's Muse grown with this growing age,
> And dearer birth than this his love had brought—

the second line of which, by the way, awakens interest, as hinting, once more, at the actual, parental relationship of the two individuals concerned—Shakespeare, at this period of his life, was not satisfied with the progress that he believed himself to be making as a poet, and seems to fear certain rivals in the field—writers who "better prove," certainly in the matter of style, if not of "love." Nor, I think, can there be any reasonable doubt concerning the identity of the individual, who, temporarily, to some extent, is arousing Oxford's apprehension. He is George Chapman, whom Shakespeare, in the ensuing sonnets—50/63 in the new order [1]—attacks again and again, repeating some of those attacks, in very similar words, and at about the same period, in "Love's Labour's Lost." Chapman, on the other hand, as we have seen in the last chapter, makes, almost simultaneously, a long succession of secret attacks upon Oxford, in his poems, "The Shadow of Night," "A Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy," and so forth, published in 1594 and 1595, while Chapman's deep concern with Shakesperean plays generally, and with "Twelfth Night," "Richard II," "Hamlet," and "Macbeth," in particular, I have shewn, conclusively, I hope, in my last book. The exact truth of this difficult matter, I do not pretend to have fathomed; but my tentative theory is, that Chapman may, possibly, have aroused Oxford's jealousy,[2] by angling for his Countess's sympathy, with eulogistic dedications to the young heir. I must, however,

[1] In the quarto sequence, 84, 85, 86, 80, 79, 101, 83, 105, 38, 78, 82, 21, 70, 69.

[2] Oxford was not, in a literary sense, jealous of Chapman, nor, I think, of any other contemporary, unless it were Philip Sidney. But in that case there were other motives for dislike.

endeavour to prove, finally and irrefutably, my contention that, just as we have seen Chapman attacking Oxford-Shakespeare, in his poems of the 'nineties—and being, in his turn, attacked by Shakespeare-Oxford, in "Love's Labour's Lost"—so also Chapman again assails his rival, as author of the sonnets, and is vigorously answered by him therein. Sonnet 51/85 offers a pleasing example of Oxford's sincere regard for the most formidable of his literary rivals.

My tongue-tied Muse in manners holds her still,
While comments of your praise, richly compil'd,
Rehearsers character with golden quill,
And precious phrase by all the Muses fil'd.
I think good thoughts, whilst others write good words,
And, like unletter'd clerk, still cry "Amen"
To every hymn that able spirit affords,
In polish'd form of well refined pen.
Hearing you prais'd, I say, "'Tis so, 'tis true,"
And to the most of praise add something more;
But that is in my thought, whose love to you,
Though words come hindmost holds his rank before.
Then others for the breath of words respect,
Me for my dumb thoughts, speaking in effect.

Here the "precious phrase by all the Muses fil'd," seems to be an eulogy of Chapman's style, by a generous opponent, while

every hymn that able spirit affords
In polish'd form of well refined pen,

I read as open praise of Chapman's "Hymnus in Noctem," and other poems, in which we have already seen the secret allusions to Shakespeare. Sonnets 52/86 and 53/80 read as follows:—

Was it the proud full sail of his great verse,
Bound for the prize of all too precious you,
That did my ripe thoughts in my brain inhearse,
Making their tomb the womb wherein they grew?

Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
Above a mortal pitch, that struck me dead?
No, neither he, nor his compeers by night,
Giving him aid, my verse astonished.
He, nor that affable familiar ghost,
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence,
As Victors of my silence cannot boast;
I was not sick of any fear from thence.
But when your countenance fill'd up his line,
Then lack'd I matter; that enfeebled mine.

O, how I faint when I of you do write,
Knowing a better spirit doth use your name,
And in the praise thereof spends all his might,
To make me tongue-tied, speaking of your fame!
But since your worth, wide as the ocean is,
The humble as the proudest sail doth bear,
My saucy bark, inferior far to his,
On your broad main doth wilfully appear.
Your shallowest help will hold me up afloat,
Whilst he upon your soundless deep doth ride;
Or, being wreck'd, I am a worthless boat,
He of tall building and of goodly pride.
Then if he thrive and I be cast away,
The worst was this: my love was my decay.[1]

Both these sonnets are very interesting; though not altogether comprehensible to me. The reference to the "saucy bark," compared with the ship "of tall building," and the wrecking and "cast-away" metaphors, at once suggest the defeat of the Armada, to which we shall find a still more significant allusion, later on; and these ship-metaphors also remind one of the well known wit combats at the Mermaid, between Shakespeare and Jonson, as described by Fuller.

The most important allusions, however, are the personal ones to Chapman, whom Shakespeare, if we

[1] Is it not a deeply interesting thought that Shakespeare, who never, so far as one can determine, short-circuited himself in any of his plays—not even in the intenser moments of "Lear" and "Othello"—cannot trust his art, when the love and loyalty of his son are in question?

are to judge by such phrases as "the full proud sail," and "a better spirit doth use your name," quite evidently held in some awe—a feeling due, I think, primarily, to the consciousness that his (Shakespeare's) as yet comparatively immature poetry has not behind it, nor will ever have, the classical learning with which Chapman is saturated; and, secondly, to an uneasy recognition that the "full proud sail," of Chapman's verse, is filled, at times, by the breath of swelling metaphysical thought, such as, excepting, perhaps, here and there, in "Macbeth," shall blow rarely through even the greatest of Shakespeare's lines. The poet of the sonnets knows full well—and the knowledge stings him—that his rival is the deeper thinker, and, probably, also, the cleaner liver of the two; but, at the same time, Shakespeare, ultra-sensitive as he is, and endowed with a remorselessly penetrating, humorous insight deep down into human mind and soul, holds Chapman a little suspect, especially in that matter of the "spirits," with which the poet of "The School of Night" claimed to hold intercourse; as we know from the passage, in his dedication to Roydon, of "The Shadow of Night," wherein spirit-invocation, by a poet, is upheld; at the same time that the sensuality of Shakespeare's early poems is bitterly attacked. Thus Chapman:—

> Now what a supererogation in wit is this, to think skill so mightily pierced with their loves, that she should prostitutely shew them her secrets, when she will scarcely be looked upon by others but with invocation, fasting, watching; yea not without having drops of their souls like an heavenly familiar.

This is rather more than Shakespeare—awed, at times, though he be, by Chapman, can stand; whereupon we read:—

> Was it his spirit, by spirits taught to write
> Above a mortal pitch that struck me dead?
> No, neither he, nor his compeers by night
> Giving him aid, my verse astonished.

He, nor that affable familiar ghost
Which nightly gulls him with intelligence. . . .

Here the gibe at "The Shadow of Night" is palpable; and it is interesting to see these lines confirmed by that from Hall's "Biting Satire," on "Labeo," which was Hall's and Marston's nickname for the author of "Venus and Adonis," and, apparently, of "Love's Labour's Lost," whom both writers, it seems, honestly believed to be Bacon, or connected with Bacon. Hall's line runs, "Phœbus filled him with intelligence," and is, no doubt, a reference to Shakespeare's genuine inspiration from the spirit of the day :—

O 'tis the sun that maketh all things shine— [1]

contrasted with Chapman's avowed preference for voices of the night. Oxford, however, was, quite evidently, in some doubt, concerning Chapman; and, as Mr. Acheson has remarked, cannot easily decide whether he ought to regard him as the inspired genius, or as the pedantic, gullible old fool. If, as I suppose, the individual addressed in these two sonnets is still the young son, Oxford must be imagining him as grown up, or, at least, as old enough to receive, and to appreciate, the homage of a rival poet: but I do not pretend wholly to have fathomed the meaning of these difficult verses.

The sonnets 54–57 that follow (79, 101, 83, 105 in the quarto sequence) harp, in substance, upon the same theme; and sonnets 58–59 (38 & 78 in quarto) contain some interesting lines, particularly those in which Oxford compares his son to the tenth Muse :—

Be thou the tenth Muse, ten times more in worth
Than those old nine which rhymers invocate—

and seems jealously inclined to dub every pen an alien one that, from outside the family circle, dares to praise the boy. Sonnet 59/78 runs ;—

[1] Biron (Oxford), "Love's Labour's Lost," IV, 3.

So oft have I invoked thee for my Muse
And found such fair assistance in my verse,
As every alien pen hath got my use
And under thee their poetry disperse,
Thine eyes, that taught the dumb on high to sing
And heavy ignorance aloft to fly,
Have added feathers to the learned's wing
And given grace a double majesty.
Yet be most proud of that which I compile,
Whose influence is thine and born of thee;
In other's works thou dost but mend the style,
And arts with thy sweet graces graced be.
But thou art all my art, and dost advance
As high as learning my rude ignorance.

In that closing line, as I read Shakespeare's thought, he contrasts the heavier, more lettered, qualities of Chapman's mind with the ruder, less scholarly, uninformedness of his own.[1] The reference, in the sonnet that follows (60/82), to

What strained touches rhetoric can lend—

I take to be a thrust at Chapman's incoherent, and effortful style; while the closing six lines of 61/21—

O let me, true in love, but truly write,
And then believe me, my love is as fair
As any mother's child, though not so bright
As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air.
Let them say more that like of hearsay well;
I will not praise that purpose not to sell—

are, as already pointed out, in Chapter V, first, an allusion to Chapman's "Amorous Zodiac," and, in the closing couplet, are a charge which Shakespeare iterates against Chapman in "Love's Labour's Lost," that his rival, unlike himself, writes with mercenary motive.[2]

[1] See Chapman's dedication to Roydon of his "Shadow of Night" (1594), wherein the words "benumbing ignorance . . . passion-driven men reading but to curtail a tedious hour," are almost certainly aimed at Shakespeare. See ante p. 98.

[2] The charge of mercenary motive—"gain not glory," and so forth—is frequently made against Shakespeare. Whatever may be said about the plays, of the sonnets it is certainly untrue.

Several lines of sonnet 63/69 seem also to be aimed directly at Chapman :—

All tongues, the voice of souls, give thee that due,

reading like an echo from " Ovid's Banquet of Sense " (1595),—

Alas ! why lent not Heaven the soul a tongue ?—

and the line—

They look into the beauty of thy mind—

recalling a couplet from the same poem ;—

Your eyes were never yet let in to see
The majesty and riches of the mind.

Those lines, indeed, may well have been aimed, by Chapman, at this very sonnet, written, I suspect, in the same year. The opening of sonnet 66/33—

Full many a glorious morning have I seen
Flatter the mountain-tops with sovereign eye,
Kissing with golden face the meadows green,
Gilding pale streams with heavenly alchemy ;
Anon permit the basest clouds to ride
With ugly rack on his celestial face,
And from the forlorn world his visage hide
Stealing unseen to west with this disgrace—

I take to be another reminiscence of the Italian journey of 1575–76 ; for the reason that, since our British landscape does not contain mountain scenery on this side the Severn, or of the Tweed, the picture of golden sunshine " flattering the mountain-tops," though natural enough in a hundred places, through which Oxford must have passed, on his journey to Siena and Sicily, hardly describes our islands ; though, in this connection, one ought, perhaps, to remember that Oxford, when serving in Sussex's Scottish campaign of 1570, may have had a glimpse or two of the Highland Grampians. The Stratford actor, however, on his journeys between London and the Midlands, cannot have seen any " mountains " higher than the Chiltern Hills ; and it is doubtful

whether his travels ever took him farther north than Warwickshire, or westward than Bristol.

Interesting, too, are the opening lines of 67/34, still couched in the vein of travel :—

> Why didst thou promise such a beauteous day,
> And make me travel forth without my cloak,
> To let base clouds o'ertake me in my way,
> Hiding thy bravery in their rotten smoke ?—

for although, admittedly, any person, at any time, may be overtaken coatless by a rainstorm, the incident is one that fits very easily into Oxford's reminiscences—and these sonnets are nothing if not reminiscent—because as Capt. Ward has shewn so ingeniously, in his edition of "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres," just such an incident happened to Oxford, when he was a boy of twelve years old, riding, immediately after his father's death, from Castle Hedingham, the family mansion of the Oxfords, to London ; and, therefore, in circumstances that would impress the event vividly upon his mind. Eleven years later, Lord Oxford, when editing "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres," under the pen initials "G. T.," placed the following remarks at the head of Gascoigne's "De Profundis" :—

> The occasion of the writing hereof (as I have heard Master Gascoigne say) was this. Riding between Chelmsford and London his mind mused on the days past . . . when a great shower of rain did overtake him ; and he being unprepared for the same, as in a jerkin without a cloak—the weather being very fair and unlikely to have changed so—he gan to accuse himself for his carelessness ; and thereupon in his good disposition compiled first this sonnet, and afterwards the translated Psalm of *De Profundis* as here followeth.

Capt. Ward comments as follows :—

> Anybody will surely agree that two such similar and graphic accounts—Gascoigne's and "G. T.'s"[1]—of so

[1] Gascoigne's account of the incident will be found on p. xxx of Capt. Ward's Introduction. For quotation above see Capt. Ward's Introduction, pp. xxx-xxxiii.

trivial an incident as a ride in the rain, could only have been written by actual eye-witnesses; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that "G. T." and Gascoigne rode into London together. The fact that Lord Oxford—assuming him to be "G. T."—carefully says that he was only *told* of the incident by Gascoigne is accounted for because he was writing under the pseudonym "G. T.," and naturally did not wish to disclose his identity too obviously. But does any one imagine for an instant that details such as Gascoigne being in a jerkin without a cloak, or the unexpectedness of the storm, could have been remembered, for eleven years, by anybody who had not actually seen the episode. Surely the occasion was one likely to impress a boy of 12½, with peculiar vividness; the sense of loneliness at his father's death, and the great adventure of leaving home for the first time to go to London, would conspire to make this a red-letter day in his life. Moreover, is it not possible that Gascoigne's "striking over" into a translation of *De Profundis*, a funeral dirge, is connected with the burial of the 16th Earl of Oxford, which took place on August 31st? And finally, as Oxford was so young at the time, what more natural than for his widowed mother to send him and his seven score horse to his future guardian—Sir William Cecil—in charge of the cousin by marriage of one of his neighbouring tenants?

I take it as almost certain, therefore, that sonnet 67/34 is a versified reminiscence of that vividly remembered incident of Oxford's boyhood.

The sonnets that follow, with their themes of parental jealousy, baby-worship, and so forth,[1] though fascinating enough, as providing food for speculation, do not immediately touch our subject, until we come to 88/104, which runs as follows.

> To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
> For as you were when first your eye I eyed,
> Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold
> Have from the forests shook three summers pride,
> Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd
> In process of the seasons I have seen,

[1] 68/87 in the new order :—42, 40, 95, 96, 92, 57, 93, 58, 88, 89, 35, 41, 97, 56, 98, 102, 100, 63, 19, 68, in the quarto sequence.

Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
Ah, yet doth beauty, like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceiv'd;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceiv'd.
For fear of which, hear this, thou age unbred;
Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

These exquisite lines continue, in my judgment, Oxford's oblation of joy, over his son and heir, now, as the poet states, almost openly, come to three years of age. Henry having been born in 1593, the date of this sonnet seems to be 1596, one year later than those "rival poet" verses, that we have just been considering. The reader will not fail to observe, that my interpretation of these sonnets—by which they are being brought, quite naturally, into chronological sequence—thus corroborates, exactly, the new rhyme-linked order which was determined, by Sir Denys Bray, upon technical considerations alone, and without major regard to sequence of ideas or the subtler meaning of the lines. Each method of interpretation, therefore, affords strong support to the other, as will become even more clearly evident, with every sonnet yet to be examined.

Sonnet 90/77 runs thus :—

Thy glass will shew thee how thy beauties wear,
Thy dial how thy precious minutes waste;
The vacant leaves thy mind's imprint will bear,
And of this book this learning mayst thou taste.
The wrinkles which thy glass will truly show
Of mouthed graves will give thee memory;
Thou, by thy dial's shady stealth mayst know
Time's thievish progress to eternity;
Look, what thy memory cannot contain
Commit to these waste blanks, and thou shalt find
Those children nurs'd, deliver'd from thy brain,
To take a new acquaintance of thy mind.
These offices, so oft as thou wilt look,
Shall profit thee and much enrich thy book.

Here the father is imagining his boy as old enough to write; and, thereupon, gives him certain "waste blanks," otherwise a diary, in which to record whatever "thy memory cannot contain"; and in the next (91/122), after a passing, though significant, allusion to "idle rank," reminds the object of his adoration, that the father has no need of such tallies, whereon to score his love;[1] for,

> To keep an adjunct to remember thee
> Were to import forgetfulness in me.

This brings us to 92/125, one of the most important sonnets of the series, since it seems to point directly to a noteworthy incident in the life of Edward de Vere; and, when read in conjunction with the ten sonnets that follow it, is alone sufficient, in my judgment, to establish the historic identity of their author, beyond all reasonable doubt.

> Were't aught to me I bore the canopy,
> With my extern the outward honouring?
> Or laid great bases for eternity,
> Which prove more short than waste or ruining?
> Have I not seen dwellers on form and favour
> Lose all and more, by paying too much rent,
> For compound sweet foregoing simple savour,
> Pitiful thrivers in their gazing spent?
> No, let me be obsequious in thy heart,
> And take thou my oblation, poor but free,
> Which is not mix'd with seconds, knows no art
> But mutual render, only me for thee.
> Hence, thou suborn'd informer! a true soul
> When most impeach'd stands least in thy control.

These lines I take to be nothing less than a direct reference, by Oxford, to the bearing, by himself, of the canopy of state over the head of Queen Elizabeth; when, on the occasion of the Armada Victory Celebration, in London, on November 24, 1588, the queen walked, in solemn procession, up the nave of St. Paul's,

[1] "Nor need I tallies thy dear love to score."

with the bearers, Lord Shrewsbury,[1] as Earl Marshal, on one side, and Lord Oxford, as Lord Great Chamberlain, on the other. Here then the Earl is telling how, upon that historic day, himself "honoured the outward," even though his mind was occupied, the while, with deeper matters, such as the laying of those "great bases for eternity," with his own poems and plays, to which, already, his teeming fancies were giving shape, and concerning which he was, I think, in those early days, despondent, lest they should "prove more short than waste or ruining"—than such waste, for example, as that with which his enemies were so often, and slanderously, charging him. Now, while at work upon this sonnet, he will be "obsequious," not in a queen's presence, but in the heart of his son, out of reach of those "suborned informers," who, in 1576 and 1580, had sought to bring his name, and reputation, to ruin and disgrace.[2]

At this point—and rightly so, in view of the vital importance of this clue—the reader may be asking whether I can supply corroborative evidence of my interpretation of this "canopy" sonnet. I can, and, for the purpose, will first refer him to Chapman's poem to Harriots, which, with this argument in view, I purposely excluded from the previous chapter. Now certain portions of that poem are, in my judgment, aimed, intentionally, at the Shakesperean sonnets, and at their author, in the person of Oxford; these three lines—

> And thine own name in merit, far above
> Their tympanies of state, that arms of love,
> Fortune, or blood shall lift to dignity—

[1] No one, I imagine, supposes that Lord Shrewsbury was the author of the sonnets.

[2] Col. Ward thinks—and I incline to agree—that this "suborned informer" is Charles Arundel, Oxford's cousin, and author of "Leicester's Commonwealth," a libel on the Queen. Col. Ward writes: "The couplet closing the sonnet is a passionate exclamation suggested by the last word of the third quatrain, "thee," i.e. the Queen.

referring to sonnet 92, from which I have just quoted, with its bearing-of-the-canopy motive; the canopy being directly referred to by Chapman, in the phrase, "tympanies of state." Uncertain of the exact meaning of the word "tympanies," I consulted my dictionary, and found that the verb "to tympanize" (French tympanizer) meant "to stretch the skin of, as on a drum," while "tympanum" was given the meaning of "a framework covered with some tense material." "Tympanies," therefore, beyond question, means, simply, "canopies"; and Chapman's lines to Harriots, above quoted, may be fairly rendered thus: "Your own name (Harriots) is a far more deserving one than are names born by those, who, for reasons of fortune, or love, or noble blood, shall bear in their hands, or shall have borne over their heads, the canopy of state." I submit, moreover, and shall, in a moment, offer further evidence to prove, that these lines are aimed directly at Shakespeare's "canopy" sonnet; meanwhile, in immediate corroboration of the meaning which I attach to them, I quote, from the next sonnet 93/76, the following striking lines:—

> Why write I still all one, ever the same,
> And keep invention in a noted weed,
> That every word doth almost tell my name,
> Showing their birth and where they did proceed—

wherein Shakespeare realizes, and admits to the reader, with half scornful insouciance, that the "canopy" lines, since they can point at no other individual, have given away his name and secret,

> Showing their birth and where they did proceed.[1]

The mystery is revealed, at last; and now sonnet after

[1] I had, of course, realized, long ago, that these two sonnets were of more than ordinary significance; but, being some fifty sonnets apart, as they were in the quarto order (125 and 76), I had no idea that they were related. Placed together, they confirm and support each other, and again prove the immense value of Sir Denys Bray's discovery.

sonnet will continue to make all things clear; for the next, in the new sequence, 94/123, opens thus :—

No, Time, thou shalt not boast that I do change—

and closes upon the couplet :—

This I do vow, and this shall ever be :
I will be true, despite thy scythe and thee.

Here Oxford, as I read him, with his mind ranging back over bygone years, and, as we shall see, in a few moments, over the personalities and deeds of his forbears—who also helped nobly in the making of English history—says, in effect: "Our individual span of life being brief, and Time working perpetual change, we naturally admire what is old; but behind all transient phenomena lies changeless truth; and how can I, with my family motto of "Vero Nihil Verius," to live up to, speak less than the thing that is, or conceal, permanently, even my name. Whereupon, in the original rhyme-linked order, follows sonnet after sonnet, wherein the poet's glance, "in a fine frenzy rolling," continues to range between past and present, rejoicing again, in the opening lines of 96/124, that his love for his son—himself very near, in birth, to a child of state—is not subject to the chance and change of time, but, rooted deep within the father's soul,

was builded far from accidents;
It suffers not in smiling pomp; nor falls
Under the blow of thralled discontents,
Whereto the inviting time our fashion calls.

This passage, moreover, brings forward the promised, corroborative evidence, connecting these sonnets with Chapman's reference to the canopy; for I suggest that the words last quoted are directly aimed at, by Chapman, when, only a dozen lines or so above those in which he speaks of the "tympanies of state," he writes that Harriots has,

By apt and adamantine industry
Proposing still demonstrate Verity

For your great object, far from plodding gain,
Or thirst of glory; when, absurd and vain,
Most students in their whole instruction are,
But in traditions more particular;
Leaning like rotten houses on out beams,
And with true light fade in themselves like dreams.
True learning hath a body absolute,
That in apparent sense itself can suit,
Not hid in airy terms: as if it were,
Like spirits fantastic, that put men in fear,
And are but bugs form'd in their foul conceits,
Not made for sale.

Shakespeare has been saying that his house of love, "builded far from accidents," feared not "policy," and was in no danger of falling, as had his worldly hopes, "under the blow of thralled discontents." Chapman, in the remarkable though characteristically obscure passage above quoted, deliberately attacks these sonnets; vaunting his patron's "adamantine industry," as against Oxford's erratic impulses; and Harriots' power to "demonstrate Verity," against Oxford's ability, as his rival sees it, to do no better than rhyme about the truth: following on with the usual taunts, at Oxford's "thirst of glory," "false knowledge," "spirits fantastic," "airy tricks of expression," and so forth; Chapman asserting that Shakespeare has not "builded" true, nor upon sure foundations, but—adapting Oxford's own metaphor—is

Leaning like rotten houses on out beams—

the "out beam" being, in part, I take it, a concealed gibe at the boy, Henry de Vere.

Remembering, further, that this poem was printed in 1598, it is interesting, in connection with the phrase, "thralled discontent," to remind ourselves that, throughout the 'nineties, Oxford, after his retirement from court, was certainly dissatisfied, and conscious of a sense of thwarted destiny, as Professor Harrison, in his "Eliza-

bethan Journal," shews, in the paragraph "Spanish Hopes." [1]

> "The Earls Oxford and Cumberland, and the Lords Strange and Percy are much talked of as alienated by discontent. Their chief hope is the queen's death."

No less interesting is the next sonnet, 97/107, which runs :—

> Not mine own fears, nor the prophetic soul
> Of the wide world dreaming on things to come,
> Can yet the lease of my true love control,
> Suppos'd as forfeit to a confin'd doom.
> The mortal moon hath her eclipse endur'd,
> And the sad augurs mock their own presage ;
> Incertainties now crown themselves assurred,
> And peace proclaims olives of endless age.
> Now with the drops of this most balmy time
> My love looks fresh, and Death to me subscribes,
> Since, spite of him, I'll live in this poor rhyme,
> While he insults o'er dull and speechless tribes ;
> And thou in this shalt find thy monument,
> When tyrants' crests and tombs of brass are spent.

Here the poet, apparently, is disturbed by premonitions of his own death, which, he fears, may soon terminate that "confined doom," or, in other words, his retired, and somewhat solitary, life ; and that lament Chapman, I think, aims at in the Harriots poem, when he writes :—

> O fortune-glossed pompists and proud misers,
> That are of arts such impudent despisers,
> Then past anticipating dooms and scorns—

that last line describing, exactly, the anticipations of death, in which Oxford has just been indulging, in the sonnet referred to. Here, however, a difficulty arises, since the middle lines of that sonnet 97/107, with their reference to the eclipse of the "mortal moon"—almost certainly a reference to the passing of Queen Elizabeth—and the crowning of "incertainties," by the accession of James, points clearly to 1603, only one year before

[1] p. 167. S. P. Dom., ccxliii., II.

Oxford's own death, as the date of this sonnet; if not to 1604, the year of peace with Spain. I incline to think that Oxford wrote the sonnet in 1598, and in a mood prophetic of coming international peace, and of his royal mistress's death, when already, perhaps, he may have felt a strong premonition of his own approaching end.

Sonnets 98–100—or 55, 106, and 59, in the quarto order—I must quote in full; because they are of vital importance to the completion of our case, and argument.

Not marble, nor the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;
But you shall shine more bright in these contents
Than in swept stone, besmear'd with sluttish time.
When wasteful war shall statues overturn,
And broils root out the work of masonry,
Nor Mars his sword nor war's quick fire shall burn
The living record of your memory.
'Gainst death and all-oblivious enmity
Shall you pace forth; your praise shall still find room
Even in the eyes of all posterity
That wear this world out to the ending doom.
So, till the judgment that yourself arise,
You live in this, and dwell in lovers' eyes.

When in the chronicle of wasted time
I see descriptions of the fairest wights,
And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights;
Then, in the blazon of sweet beauty's best,
Of hand, of foot, of lip, of eye, of brow,
I see their antique pen would have express'd
Even such a beauty as you master now.
So all their praises are but prophecies
Of this our time, all you prefiguring;
And, for they look'd but with divining eyes,
They had not skill enough your worth to sing;
For we, which now behold these present days,
Have eyes to wonder, but lack tongues to praise.

If there be nothing new, but that which is
Hath been before, how are our brains beguil'd,
Which, labouring for invention, bear amiss
The second burthen of a former child!
O, that record could with a backward look,
Even of five hundred courses of the sun,
Show me your image in some antique book,
Since mind at first in character was done!
That I might see what the old world could say
To this composed wonder of your frame;
Whether we are mended, or whether better they,
Or whether revolution be the same.
O, sure I am, the wits of former days
To subjects worse have given admiring praise.

Here again, in my judgment, we find ourselves face to face with a further series of fascinating, and finally clinching, proofs of Oxford's identity with the author of the sonnets; in explanation of which I must digress a little, to remind the reader of certain events, and circumstances, supplying necessary clues to these verses; all of them discoverable in the family history of the Earls of Oxford.

The first of these takes us back to the 11th century, when Edward de Vere's ancestor, Aubrey de Vere, Second Earl of Oxford, forming one of the assembled Christian host before Antioch, during the First Crusade, became the central figure of the following legend, related by Leland,[1]

> In the year of our Lord, 1098, Corborant, Admiral of the Soudan of Perce (i.e. Soldan or Sultan of Persia) was fought with at Antioch, and discomfited by the Christaines. The night cumming on yn the chace of this Bataile, and waxing dark, the Christaines being 4 miles from Antioch, God willing the saufte of the Christaines shewed a white starre or molette of fyve pointes on the Christain Host, which to every mannes sighte did lighte and arrest upon the Standard of Albry, ther shyning excessively.

[1] "Some Account of the Family of de Vere, Earls of Oxford," by Rev. Severne A. A. Maendie, p. 9.

That star, or mullet, was incorporated into the heraldic arms of the de Veres, and is to be seen to-day beside the boar (Verres)—which was the rebus, or pictorial representation of the family name [1]—on the parish church of Castle Hedingham, and on many other churches and buildings, in what may be called the de Vere country. Castle Hedingham, however, was not the traditional burying-place of the Earls of Oxford. A few were laid to rest there; but the majority were buried at the priory of Earl's Colne, where three elaborate tombs, probably of the Eighth, Ninth, and Eleventh Earls, may yet be seen. There is also a bas-relief of Edward de Vere's grandfather, John de Vere, Fifteenth Earl, who died in 1540,[2] and of his wife, on the alabaster top of his tomb in the church of Castle Hedingham.

Bearing these facts in mind; and remembering, also, that, as we shall see in the next chapter, the Earls of Oxford played prominent parts in many of the principal battles, and other great events of English history, from Hastings to Bosworth Field, and the Spanish Armada, it seems to me almost certain that, in the three sonnets last above quoted, Oxford's imagination and family memories, are ranging back over the deeds of his ancestors, and, with the ravages of wars in which they took part, and also the "gilded monuments," [3] at Earl's Colne, vividly in mind, he comforts his memory with the thought that, in this "chronicle of wasted time," with its mournful passing of so many "ladies dead and lovely knights," as also of all the antique

[1] The de Vere arms technically described were: Quarterly gules and or. In the first quarter a mullet argent. *Crest:* A boar passant azure, bristled and hoofed or. *Supporters:* Dexter, a boar azure, bristled and hoofed or. Sinister a harpy.

[2] For the references to this Earl and his wife, in "Romeo and Juliet," see post pp. 302–303. The author visited all these tombs in the summer of 1928.

[3] The two opening lines of this sonnet, 98/55, are, I think, aimed at by Chapman in the closing lines of the Harriot's poem—

So shall their wealth-burst wombs
Be made with empty pen their honour's tombs.

beauty of bygone times, there endures yet something—namely, his own "powerful rhyme"—within which all that vanished loveliness shall be lauded and enshrined. And, as a hint of the family name, which the poet is honouring, and of the motive that accompanies the star upon the family coat-of-arms, he writes of these very monuments of his ancestors being "besmeared with sluttish slime," and pictures, almost, the rooting of the boar's snout, in the line :—

> And broils root out the work of masonry.

That these words are no mere fancies, of my own spinning, but do, in fact, set down, with absolute conformity to historic truth, the actual processes of Oxford's mind, I will now endeavour to shew. Immediately upon reading the four lines :—

> O, that record could with a backward look,
> Even of five hundred courses of the sun,
> Show me your image in some antique book,
> Since mind at first in character was done—

set, as they now are, in their correct place and context—the phrase "five hundred courses of the sun," struck me as being peculiarly significant, and sent my mind back, instantly, to the days of the Crusades ; when, suddenly, it flashed upon me that, 1598 being, almost certainly, the date of this sonnet—as it was certainly the date of Chapman's poems commenting upon these very verses—a "backward look," of five hundred years, would give 1098, the precise year in which the star hung over the banner of Aubrey de Vere. From that moment I saw that this verse corroborated, exactly, my interpretation of the sonnets, that had preceded it, and made absolutely certain the fact that Oxford, the actual author of the sonnets, was, all this while, comparing the present with the past ; and, in such lines as—

> Whether we are mended, or whether better they,
> Or whether revolution be the same—

was simply speculating, as to whether his great ancestors,

Aubrey and the rest, over whose tombs he has been rhyming, were really better men than himself, or his adored son would ever be, or whether, "revolution being the same," there was not, after all, very much to choose, one way or another, between the 11th century, and the 16th.[1] With this clue in my mind, I was, of course, alert for further references to the star, and boar, motives, from the Oxford coat-of-arms; and had not long to wait; for in the next sonnets but one—102/26 and 103/23—I found them both, in the following couplets :—

> Till whatsoever star that guides my moving
> Points on me graciously with fair aspect [2]

and :—

> Or some fierce thing replete with too much rage
> Whose strength's abundance weakens his own heart;

which is about as plain a reference as one could wish, not merely to the boar, but, particularly, to him for whom the boar stood, who, as we have seen before, when talking of Oxford, short-circuits himself through his own wild emotions. These words, moreover, fit in exactly with what Joseph Hall wrote concerning "Labeo" :—

> For he can tell how fury reft his sense—

as also with the many references to the boar in "Venus and Adonis." Further, lest any reader should still be disposed to challenge my conclusions, let me remind him that Hatton, admittedly referring to Oxford, had written to the Queen, in 1572, "the boar's tusk may both raze and tear"; and that, in the fifteen-nineties, the device on the coat-of-arms was habitually used as

[1] It is interesting to compare these two lines. Shakespeare's—

> Show me your image in some antique book (*Sonnet* 100/59),

and this from Spenser's "Faerie Queene" (*Book* II, Introduction), expressing the same idea—

> "And in this antique ymage thy great auncestry."

[2] See also sonnet 110/116 (post p. 189). "It is the star to every wandering bark." And *cf.* the line of stars bordering the top of the church tower at Earl's Colne.

a means of identification, as witness Nashe, when he wrote in "Strange Newes" (1592):—

> Now a man may not talk of a dog, but it is surmised that he aims at him that giveth the dog in his crest (Shrewsbury); he cannot name straw, but he must pluck a wheatsheaf (Burleigh) in pieces.[1]

The matter, therefore, I submit, is perfectly clear; and finally conclusive. Oxford, writing for his young son Henry, the heir to the title, and the Eighteenth Earl of Oxford to be—a boy five years old in 1598—is ranging, imaginatively, over the deeds of his ancestors, from the crusading age, to his own day; recalling their feats-of-arms, their radiant ladies, the antique, illuminated books, that chronicled the might of one, and the beauty of another; the "gilded monuments," wherein their bones are mouldering; and the mullet, and the boar, blazoned upon coats-of-arms, and beaconing from the summits of church towers. Could any pageant of events, and memories, be more conclusive? Has there existed, through the centuries of our English history, any single individual, other than Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, to whom, in sequent and ordered detail, and with exact correspondence to historic fact, every one of these facts, circumstances, inferences, instantly, and naturally, applies? Should any of my readers, with this rhyme-linked order of the sonnets, and my comments thereon, before him, be inclined still to urge the suggestion, that they apply, in truth, not to any Earl of Oxford, but to the actor, of Stratford-on-Avon, or to Francis Bacon, he is, of course, fully entitled to his individual opinion; but how shall I, personally, be able to exclude him from the company of those who would not believe, "though one rose from the dead"? The case for Oxford as "Shakespeare" rests, in my judgment, more firmly upon the sonnets than upon any other part of his work, excepting, possibly, "Hamlet."

The limits of this book will not permit me to go

[1] Works. Ed. Mr. Kerrow. I, 260.

through all the remaining sonnets in detail; but I will comment briefly upon several, of which the next interesting one is 107/121.

'Tis better to be vile than vile esteemed,
When not to be receives reproach of being;
And the just pleasure lost, which is so deem'd
Not by our feeling, but by others seeing.
For why should others' false adulterate eyes
Give salutation to my sportive blood?
Or on my frailties why are frailer spies,
Which in their wills count bad what I think good?
No, I am that I am, and they that level
At my abuses reckon up their own;
I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel;
By their rank thoughts my deeds must not be shown;
Unless this general evil they maintain:
All men are bad and in their badness reign.

This sonnet is altogether in the Hamlet vein, and that Oxford, when he wrote that tragedy, had it consciously, or unconsciously, in mind, is, it seems to me, indisputable. The "wounded name" motive is apparent from the first; and the line:—

Or on my frailties why are frailer spies

deliberately recalls, as I believe, Oxford's wrath at being spied upon by one of those frailer spies, namely his first wife, Anne Cecil, whom, in the guise of spying Ophelia, he apostrophizes in the play with, "Frailty thy name is woman." The very next line:—

Which in their wills count bad what I think good

is paraphrased in "nothing good or bad, but thinking makes it so"; and the next lines again:—

No, I am that I am, and they that level
At my abuses reckon up their own;
I may be straight, though they themselves be bevel.

exactly corroborates my theory that Burleigh, whose readiness to use spies was notorious, deliberately set his daughter to keep an eye on Oxford, as did also Polonius in the play; my reason for saying so being, that the phrase above quoted, "I am that I am," is identical, in wording, with a letter written, by Oxford, to his father-in-law, Burleigh, in 1584.[1] So forcible, individual, and wholly characteristic an expression, passing between those two men is a very strong piece of corroborative evidence; and, since every link, between the sonnets and the plays, tends further to confirm my argument, that Oxford wrote them all, let me point out that Don John—who is, in part, Oxford—says in "Much Ado," I, 3, "I cannot hide what I am."

Very interesting also is sonnet 110/116 :—

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove.
O, no! it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come;
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.
If this be error and upon me prov'd,
I never writ, nor no man ever lov'd.

This sonnet, though still concerned with marriage, recalls, at once, not "Hamlet," but "Romeo and Juliet," which is, indeed, a "marriage of true minds," whose love, given and returned, looks, indeed, unshaken upon tempests, and "bears it out even to the edge of

[1] I further believe that the line—

I may be straight though they themselves be bevel

voices the same thought that made Oxford name his father-in-law, Corambis (double-hearted); Burleigh's motto being, in part, "cor unum" (single-hearted).

doom." The wording, no less than the thought, is strongly reminiscent of the world's loveliest love-poem, of which, by the way, the first and second quartos were published about this time, in 1597 and 1599 respectively. Compare :—

| SONNET 110/116. | "ROMEO AND JULIET." |
|---|---|
| Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks Within his bending sickle's compass come | Rom. O I am fortune's fool! Beauty's ensign yet Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks. (*Spoken over Juliet's dead body*). |

Further, the sonnet provides another very interesting recurrence of the Oxford "star" motive, with innocent, and constant love conceived, this time, as the star :—

O, no it is an ever-fixed mark,
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown although his height be taken :—

and I cannot help thinking that, when Oxford wrote those words, he had in mind the stars upon the church tower of Earl's Colne, which form a landmark for miles round, and are, of course, a permanent symbol of the influence of the Earls of Oxford, in what may be called the Oxford country.

The sonnets, hereabouts, Nos. 110/115 in their new order,[1] are somewhat mysterious, and profoundly sad, harping continuously upon the slanders and shames that seem, at times, so to numb the poet's mind, that even his senses become "to critic and to flatterer stopped," while his spirit seems to be overwhelmed beneath a brooding, and utterly despondent, sense of separation—physical, or mental, or both of these,—not merely from the world itself, but from the son, who, to his father, is the light of that world. If, as, I think, must be the case, these sonnets are to be taken as almost literal autobiography, it seems that upon Oxford, then living in retirement, at Hackney, there hung, at this time, certain

[1] Nos. 116, 120, 112, 39, 36, and 90 in quarto sequence.

mysterious shames, and admitted guilts,—actual or imaginary, possibly periods of aberration—which prevented him from acknowledging his own son, and compel him to admit the necessity of a parting, even though still their "loves are one."

Sonnets 114/36 and 115/90 read as follows :—

Let me confess that we two must be twain,
Although our undivided loves are one;
So shall those blots that do with me remain,
Without thy help, by me be borne alone.
In our two loves there is but one respect,
Though in our lives a separable spite,
Which though it alter not love's sole effect,
Yet doth it steal sweet hours from love's delight.
I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame,
Nor thou with public kindness honour me,
Unless thou take that honour from thy name.
But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
As thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

Then hate me when thou wilt; if ever, now;
Now while the world is bent my deeds to cross,
Join with the spite of fortune, make me bow,
And do not drop in for an after-loss.
Ah, do not, when my heart hath 'scaped this sorrow,
Come in the rearward of a conquered woe;
Give not a windy night a rainy morrow,
To linger out a purpos'd overthrow.
If thou wilt leave me, do not leave me last,
When other petty griefs have done their spite,
But in the onset come: so shall I taste
At first the very worst of fortune's might;
And other strains of woe, which now seem woe,
Compar'd with loss of thee will not seem so.

Reading and pondering over words so poignant as these, I sometimes wonder whether Shakespeare, in the closing years of his life—the years that gave us "Hamlet," "Macbeth," and "King Lear"—did not, at

intervals, for seasons long or short, pass over the confines of sanity, into that region of untrammelled, and boundless, imaginings, which Strindberg used to declare was the happiest world of all.[1]

Sonnet 117/94, with its wistfully envious eulogy of those, who, because

> to temptation slow,
> They rightly do inherit heaven's graces;

and can, therefore, pass serenely, harmlessly, through the world, the legitimate "lords and owners of their faces," recalls, at once, the sincere admiration that Oxford felt for his equably-minded cousin, Horatio de Vere; and to which utterance is given in the eulogies of Horatio, put into the mouth of Hamlet, when the prince names, as his soul's election, the friend,

> As one in suffering all, that suffers nothing;
> A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
> Hast ta'en with equal thanks.

Oxford knows himself to be tainted, at times, with the foul odour of festering lilies (117/94); and immediately after the eulogy of the type of man who is no

> pipe for Fortune's finger
> To sound what stop she please,

rails, in the very next sonnet, against his own inimical fortune (118/111):—

> O, for my sake do you with Fortune chide,
> The guilty goddess of my harmful deeds,
> That did not better for my life provide
> Than public means which public manners breeds:
> Thence comes it that my name receives a brand,
> And almost thence my nature is subdued
> To what it works in,[2] like the dyer's hand.

[1] I do not concur in the generally accepted "serenity" of the later plays. Several of them, in my judgment, are, in part, at least, spurious, and there seem to me to be strong reasons for doubting whether "Shakespeare" wrote "The Tempest."

[2] *Cf.* "As You Like It," II, 7, wherein Jaques, who, with Touchstone, stands for Oxford, "rail'd on Lady Fortune." Observe also, in connection with this sonnet, Jaques' frequent references to "motley," followed by the "All-the-world's-a-stage" speech.

These lines provide an extremely interesting comment, by Oxford, upon the strange destiny, that makes him dependent for his livelihood, upon "public means," or, in other words, upon duties which tarnish a little the shining name of a belted Earl, and Lord Great Chamberlain of England—an imperfection that becomes yet more meaningful, when one remembers the death-bed warnings of Greene, to other fellow-playwrights, or reads such an epistle as that which, in 1595, the mid-period of the sonnets, the Lord Mayor of London wrote to the Privy Council, complaining that :—

> Among other inconveniences (of the playhouses) it is not the least that the refuse sort of evil-disposed and ungodly people about this City have opportunity hereby to assemble together and to make their matches for all their lewd and ungodly practises, being also the ordinary places for all masterless men and vagabond persons that haunt the highways to meet together.[1]

That what Shakespeare really valued, in his plays, was their poetry, rather than their drama—though he crowded into them, the while, all the drama that they could be made to contain—is an opinion that I had formed long before these investigations led me to my present point-of-view. Time may do its worst; yet there abides, with Oxford, one sure hope for eternity; "My verse shall stand."[2]

Leaving, until the next chapter, further consideration of the way in which Shakespeare's plays came to be written, and calling the reader's attention only to the two references to Shakespeare's lameness, in sonnet 121/37, I pass on to 122/110 :—

[1] See "The Shakespeare Symphony," by Harold Bayley, pp. 3, 4.

[2] The persistent iteration, by academic commentators, of the idea that Shakespeare wrote only for the stage, I regard as wholly unwarranted either by the known facts or the legitimate inferences. Often it is no better than an easy way of escape from difficulties that Stratfordians find it impossible otherwise to explain away.

Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there,
And made myself a motley to the view,
Gor'd mine own thoughts, sold cheap what is most dear,
Made old offences of affections new;
Most true it is that I have look'd on truth
Askance and strangely: but, by all above,
These blenches gave my heart another youth,
And worse essays prov'd thee by best of love!
Now all is done, have what shall have no end!
Mine appetite I never more will grind
On newer proof, to try an older friend,
A god in love, to whom I am confin'd.
Then give me welcome, next my heaven the best,
Even to thy pure and most loving breast.

These lines are generally supposed to picture Shakespeare the professional actor, making himself, in character after character, a motley to the view; and I have already given reasons for supposing that Shakespeare, the non-professional actor, did, occasionally, "play kingly parts in sport"; but my present belief is that they have a more general significance, and are simply a confession made, more probably to his wife, than to his son, that, tempted, at times, by the low moral standard of the stage of that day, he has, indeed, made "old offences of new affections"; only to discover that, after all, neither truth, nor aught else of price, is to be found upon such foul ways.

Here I pause, for a moment, to point out a noteworthy fact; that if the last two lines of 126/87 are coupled with the first seven of 127/145, there results a passage presenting very curious parallels with the fairy-plot motives of "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The lines read:—

Thus have I had thee, as a dream doth flatter,
In sleep a king, but waking no such matter.

Those lips that Love's own hand did make
Breath'd forth the sound that said, "I hate,"
To me that languish'd for her sake.

But when she saw my woeful state,
Straight in her heart did mercy come,
Chiding that tongue that ever sweet
Was us'd in giving gentle doom :—

and the analogies will escape no careful reader. The flattering of Bottom, by a dream, in which he believes himself married to a queen, but, on waking, finds that it is " no such matter " ; the " gentle doom " that is laid thereby upon Titania, preceded by the words, " languish'd for her sake," which are repeated, almost verbatim, by Oberon, in the words spoken, of that same Titania (II, 2)—" Love and languish for his sake "—all these seem to me quite convincing.

With this sonnet 127/145 begins, in the new rhyme-linked order, part two of the sonnets ; namely those concerning the dark lady, whom I hold to be Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, of whom, unfortunately, no portrait is known to exist, which would determine her shade of hair or complexion. I will not discuss these verses, at any length ; but must call attention to the most significant of them, the first being that oft-quoted 131/136, in which the poet, after playing, for fourteen lines, prettily with his name, tells us, explicitly, that he is named " Will," thereby affording great satisfaction to orthodox Stratfordians, who ask triumphantly, " What more can you ask ? " when Shakespeare himself here tells us definitely, that he is " Will."[1]

The matter, however, is, I suggest, rather less transparently simple than that : for in previous sonnets, such as those concerning the " canopy " and the " star," we have seen the poet historically identifying himself, in a manner so plain, as, seemingly, to be almost beyond discussion, and to draw from himself the instant admission, that he has, in fact, given away his name. The

[1] " Will " was a generic name, at that time, for a " well-beloved,' just as " Kate " was among women. *Cf.* Petruchio : " For dainties are all Kates," and also the forecasts of " The Taming of the Shrew " in sonnets 147 and 148. See post pp. 197, 198.

word " Will," moreover, which he admits to, is invariably printed, in these sonnets, either in italics, or in inverted commas, a most significant fact, which the advocates of the orthodox view-point usually think it prudent to overlook.

Let me here enforce my argument by an imagined analogy. Supposing I write to one of my readers an anonymous letter within the text of which I insert an obvious clue to my actual identity ; further that, a few lines lower down, in that same epistle, I admit that " every word doth almost tell my name," and, finally, that I sign my letter, " Will," in inverted commas. Is that reader, therefore, justified in assuming that my real name is Will ? Does it not, on the contrary, become obvious, that, by writing such a letter, I am saying, about as plainly as it can be said, that " Will " is not my real name, but a pseudonym ; and that the secret of my identity lies hidden, though transparently so, somewhere within the text. Such a conclusion, I submit, is precisely what the author of the sonnets intended, when he wrote :—

> Make but my name thy love, and love that still,
> And then thou lovest me, for my name is " Will." [1]

That " Shakespeare's " genuine name as author both of the sonnets and the plays, does lie hidden within these verses, this chapter has, I hope, sufficiently proved.

Temperamentally unsuited, as many a poet, before and since, has found himself to be, to the petty antagonisms, and inevitable monotonies, of married life, unhappy Oxford adores his son, but is compelled to realize that, in actual fact, he, as a father, is alone, and utterly lonely, since (135/133)

> Of him, myself and thee I am forsaken.

Already parental jealousy is begetting " new hate after new love " (136/152); coldness and alienation have

[1] *Cf.* " Romeo and Juliet," II, 2. " By a name I know not how to tell thee who I am."

succeeded to lyrical ecstasies, and to the sweetness of warm passion; and an awful dread is upon him, lest despairing, he "should go mad"; as, indeed, when considering earlier sonnets, we have held him already, almost, to be. Bickering, at times, continues.

Thou art as tyrannous, so thou art,
As those whose beauties proudly make them cruel (141/131).

The dark lady's temper makes itself felt; and she is twitting her husband because "his days are past the best," as, indeed, if we ascribe these sonnets to the late 'nineties, her lord's years, now numbering almost fifty, certainly are, when judged by Elizabethan standards of longevity.

Oxford, physically ailing, goes to Bath; to seek relief in its "valley-fountain" warmed with "a dateless lively heat"; and fails to find healing there; but, if I read these sonnets aright, he, characteristically, uses the marital bickerings of these days, to make more realistic the dialogues of Katharine and Petruchio, which certain qualities in the sonnets, hereabouts, as well as occasional parallels in diction, more than once recall.[1]

| SONNETS. | "THE TAMING OF THE SHREW." |
|---|---|
| A maid of Dian's this advantage found,<br>And his love-kindling fire did quickly steep<br>In a cold valley-fountain.<br>(147/153) | *Cf.* Katharine's cold reception of Petruchio's wooing.<br>Did ever Dian so become a grove ? |
| Roses damask'd red and white<br>A seeting bath, which yet men prove<br>Against strange maladies a sovereign cure (147/153) | Sweet as spring-time flowers<br>*Cf.* Petruchio's sovereign cure for Katharina's "strange malady." |
| I grant I never saw a goddess go<br>My mistress when she walks<br>(148/130) | Let me see thee walk. |

[1] Estimates of the date of "The Taming of the Shrew" vary between 1594 and 1602. If my inferences here are correct, they point to a date near 1600 for the Shakesperean portions of the play.

I suspect, indeed, that, during these marital tiffs and tantrums, Oxford practised, upon his countess, a little of the Petruchean method; found it, potentially, at least, effective; and subsequently wrote it up, for the amusement and edification of posterity, in what is still one of the most popular farces in the language.

One can smile at such surmises; yet a sad enough story is this of the sonnets' close, upon discord between husband and wife; and, probably, in consequence, between father and son :—

> Two loves I have of comfort and despair,
> Which like two spirits do suggest me still:
> The better angel is a man right fair,
> The worser spirit a woman colour'd ill.
> To win me soon to hell, my female evil
> Tempteth my better angel from my side,
> And would corrupt my saint to be a devil,
> Wooing his purity with her foul pride.
> And whether that my angel be turn'd fiend
> Suspect I may, yet not directly tell;
> But being both from me, both to each friend,
> I guess one angel in another's hell.
> Yet this shall I ne'er know, but live in doubt,
> Till my bad angel fire my good one out.

It may, possibly, be, that, by the good angel and the bad, he means the warring parts of his own so complex self; but these intensely pathetic lines suggest also that a "female evil," namely, in that case his wife, is luring the better angel, otherwise the young son, from his side; and is inducing the boy to side with her, against his father.[1] The exact rights and wrongs of the marital quarrel are now engulfed in the deeps of time; and it is upon a thought of the brevity of our span :—

[1] If, as seems more than probable, the MS. of the sonnets was found in Brooke House, perhaps by the Countess herself, when turning out the house, before departure from it, in 1609, it is quite evident that Lady Oxford cannot have realized the significance of their contents.

Why so large cost, having so short a lease
Dost thou upon thy fading mansion spend?—

that the ageing poet closes; with no more hope, upon his last couplet, than can be found in this:—

So shalt thou feed on death, that feeds on men;
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

A variation this, upon Hamlet's closing words: "The rest is silence": yet, when all is said, may not all of us, whose greatest and longest love is, and has been, Shakespeare, take comfort in this, that among the world's cherished possessions, for which there is not, nor ever shall be, any dying, stand, foremost, these very songs, and the everlasting plays that so many of them foretell.

## CHAPTER VII

### OXFORD'S CONNECTION WITH ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

For the arguments, figures, and statistics made use of in this chapter I am mainly indebted to the following sources :—

" Sixth Annual Report of the Shakespeare Fellowship," 1928.

" Shakespeare and Elizabethan War Propaganda," by Colonel B. R. Ward, " Royal Engineers Journal," December, 1928.

" Shakespeare and the Anglo-Spanish War," by Captain B. M. Ward, " Revue Anglo-Américaine," April and December, 1929.

Also to notes supplied and suggestions kindly made to me, from time to time, by Col. and Capt. Ward.

In the last chapter I shewed, conclusively, I hope, that the sonnets instead of being written, as is generally held, by the actor of Stratford-on-Avon, to his friend, Southampton, and to his mistress, the dark lady, were, in fact, composed by the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, for his young son, Henry, afterwards the Eighteenth Earl, and for the mother of that son, Oxford's second wife, Elizabeth Trentham, from whom, as well as from the court, at the period when the sonnets end, he is, in some mysterious way, and for not easily comprehensible reasons, alienated and estranged ; in part, it would seem, by jealous rivalry over the affections of the growing boy ; and, in part, by deeper causes, deriving from his own difficult and wayward temperament. I further shewed that some of these incidents, joyful, comical, or sorrowful, and the happenings to which they gave rise, were worked up by the dramatist into some of the plays, as, for example, " The Taming of the Shrew," wherein

the best quarrel-scene seems, probably, to have originated, in part, in a marital tiff at Brooke House.

During this period of sonnet-writing, which seems to have culminated in 1598, were completed also the earlier plays, mentioned by Meres in his list of the same date, several of which, especially "Love's Labour's Lost," and "Romeo and Juliet," with one or two others, seem to be directly foreshadowed in the sonnets. Mention of some of these will be made, later on, when we come to examine, in detail, Oxford's personal relationship to several plays, that are particularly evidential of his authorship; but, before passing on to that subject, I propose to consider a little, in the light of information that has recently been obtained, what may have been Oxford's relation, not merely to the Shakesperean plays as a whole, but, in some sort also, to the great body of Elizabethan drama, that appeared in the late 'eighties, and especially in that most fecund decade of them all, the 'nineties.

Looking back upon that astonishing series of plays, which, appearing during some twenty years, or more, continued, into the reign of James I, to delight audiences and readers, and to constitute, for posterity, a body of dramatic literature such as no other two decades in the known world's history—excepting, possibly, those that concluded the 5th century B.C.—have ever brought forth, it will, I think, be generally admitted that over them, regarded as a whole, some great, and, hitherto, almost impenetrable mystery broods. Between the actual state of Britain, in Elizabeth's day—still, to some extent, brutalized, unlettered, as regards the mass of the people, ignorant, unclean, impoverished by continuous war—and the grave sweetness, and exalted beauty of the dramatic mind, as expressed in the best passages of the best plays of that period, by whomsoever written, there exists an astonishing difference of quality and kind, to which more than one scholar has called attention; though none of them, I think, with so great

wealth of compelling argument, and happily illustrative detail, as Mr. Harold Bayley presents, in his "Shakespeare Symphony." By one sentence, in particular, among many, I was greatly struck, when the author—referring to Sir Philip Sidney's observation, in "The Defense of Poesy," that "The philosophers of Greece durst not a long time appear to the world but under the mask of poets"—remarks: "Is it possible that certain philosophers of England were driven, by the barbarous exigencies of their age, to adopt a similar expedient, and to publish their moral counsels under the masks of the actor-managers who staged them?" [1]

I answer, that it is certainly possible; and is, in fact, substantially, what actually happened; though the thing, as I see it, did not come about quite in the way that Mr. Bayley discerningly supposes. That educated men, and especially courtiers, in those days, published much of their work anonymously, is absolutely certain; a fact of which, for instance, Capt. B. M. Ward has given a striking example, in his edition of the Anthology, "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres," to which several courtiers, including Hatton and Oxford, contributed, under pseudonyms; another instance being supplied by the anonymous author of "The Arte of English Poesie," who claims to have known "many notable gentlemen in the court that have written commendably and suppressed it again, or suffered it to be published without their own names to it, as if it were a discredit for a gentleman to seem learned and to show himself amorous of any good art."

Greene also, in "A Farewell to Folly" (1591), writes:

> Others, if they come to write or publish anything in print, which for their calling and gravity being loth to have any profane pamphlets pass under their hand, get some other to set his name to their verses. Thus is the ass made proud by this underhand brokery.

[1] Harold Bayley's "The Shakespeare Symphony": Conclusion, pp. 346-347.

All this I believe to be very pertinent to the mystery of the Shakesperean plays; but it is to Col. B. R. Ward, and to his son, Capt. B. M. Ward, author of "The Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford," rather than to Mr. Bayley, that we owe what, in my judgment, is by far the most convincing, and sagacious, of the solutions yet advanced—their theory being, that the difficulty can be solved only by recognition that, during the whole of the Shakesperean period, England was engaged in a life-and-death struggle with Spain. That this simple historic fact had a vitally important bearing upon the course of Elizabethan dramatic literature, seems, hitherto, to have been almost wholly overlooked, by English scholars, who, in the main, have contented themselves with demonstrably false generalizations, based upon the untrue assumption that our British drama was established "upon the ruins of the Spanish Armada"; and so forth; thus entirely failing properly to correlate history and contemporary drama.

Now such a statement, as that concerning the Armada, though partially true, in a poetical or pictorial sense, is, in its larger implications, wholly misleading, because it assumes, as Froude appears to assume, when he entitled one of his works "A History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Defeat of the Spanish Armada," that our great naval victory ended the war with Spain, when, in fact, it did nothing of the sort; since the struggle continued until 1604, involving the country, during those years, in a desperate struggle for existence, to the consequences and magnitude of which, our historians, literary and other, as a body, have been almost wholly blind. It is not, I think, an overstatement to say, that the present chaotic and bewildered condition of modern official, and academic, Shakesperean criticism, is due to three primary causes—first, the failure of the historians to appreciate the significance, and effects, of the Spanish war; secondly, the failure of the men-of-letters to correlate Elizabethan drama with the history of the

time, and especially with the struggle with Spain; and, thirdly, their failure to realize that there were vital psychological differences between our own age, and that of the Elizabethans. Among the many criticisms levelled at my last book,—some of them by men with distinguished names, in this branch of study—nothing struck me more than the wholly naive, and utterly fallacious assumption, on the part of several of my opponents, that because we moderns, with complete freedom of pen and tongue, rarely use subterranean methods, for which we have no occasion; neither did the Elizabethans who had, nevertheless, both occasion and need. Upon these three rocks, modern academic interpretation of Elizabethan drama has made shipwreck; and must continue to do so, until our leading scholars have realized, and atoned for, these fundamental mistakes, including the basic error concerning authorship, which is a direct result of their other failures, and fallacies.

Returning to the matter of the naval war; our active participation in the anti-Spanish struggle began with an expedition to Holland, in aid of the Dutch, in 1585, at the head of which was the Earl of Oxford, as General of the Horse, and Sir John Norris, as Colonel of the Foot. Six weeks later, Lord Oxford was suddenly, and mysteriously, recalled, when the supreme command was entrusted to the Earl of Leicester, as Lieut.-General of Her Majesty's forces in the Low Countries.[1]

Then, in 1588, came the Armada, in which also Oxford took part; and by 1589 the national taxation, which had remained fairly constant since 1558, was at least doubled. In 1597 it was trebled; and by the end of 1601 it had quadrupled, just as our national budget, of about £200,000,000, before the great war, had quadrupled to about 800 millions at its close. In the matter of food prices, the same analogy holds; the price of wheat nearly trebling between 1593 and 1596, very

[1] See post pp. 322–324 for references to these events in "Othello."

much as that of all food-stuffs did, between 1914 and 1917; while scarcity, penal taxation, and universally soaring prices, inflicted, inevitably, upon our population, sufferings closely akin to those experienced throughout Europe, during the struggle that terminated in 1918. Upon this subject Col. Ward wrote, in 1928.[1]

> During the seventeen years that the (Spanish) war lasted, the direct expenditure on the Army and Navy alone exceeded 80% of the total revenue of the country on no fewer than seven occasions; and at the time of the Armada crisis—1587 and 1588—the figures are 95% and 101% respectively. In one year only—1595—did the naval and military expenditure drop below 50% of the revenue. These figures, moreover, do not take into account extraordinary expenditure, due indirectly to the war. Over and above the direct and indirect cost of the war, the Queen had to maintain the normal routine expenses of running the Court and Country.[2]

In this connection, it must be further borne in mind, that, in Elizabeth's day, there was no National Debt, and that the Exchequer, despite the enormous calls made upon it, remained solvent throughout the whole war. The detailed figures, supplied to me by Capt. Ward, from his own personal researches in the Record Office, with their sources, can be perused by the reader, in Appendix A; but I will insert here this accompanying paragraph, also received from Capt. Ward :—

> In order to appreciate these figures to the full, we must remember that the Exchequer was a ready money concern. Q. E. did not have the modern expedients of the printing press and a National Debt. Every payment into and out of the Exchequer was in bags containing hard cash. If the Exchequer had run dry nobody would have got their pay! Of course the Queen often borrowed money from the City merchants; but these loans were a very different matter from the present war-loans repayable in 50 years or

[1] "Shakespeare and Elizabethan War Propaganda," "Royal Engineers' Journal," December, 1928.

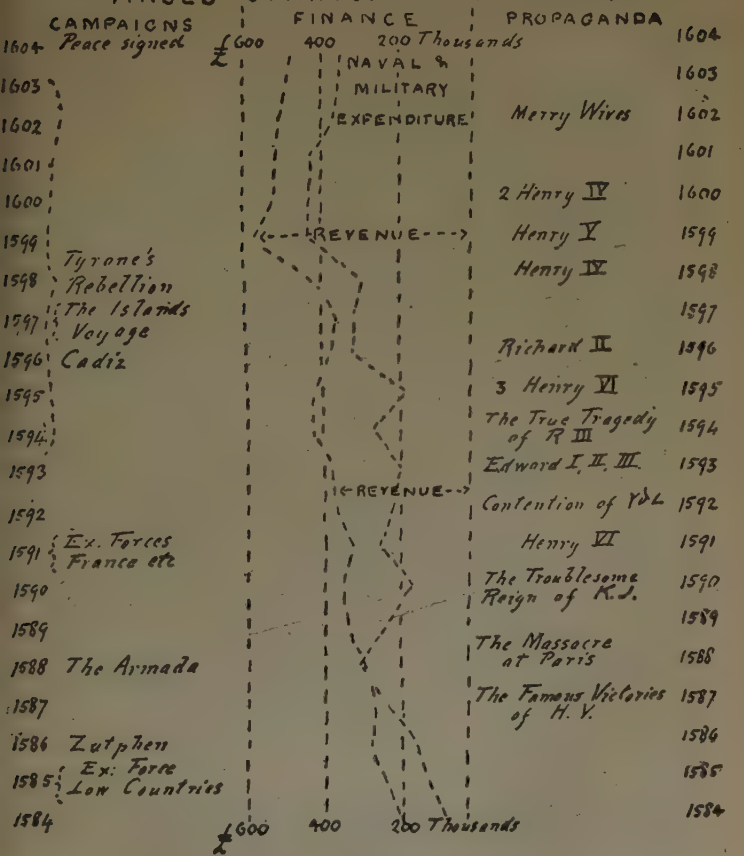
[2] See "La Revue Anglo-Américaine," April, December, 1929.

more. Probably a year's credit was the utmost the Queen could get; and she only borrowed money to tide her over a temporary embarrassment, such as must have occurred in 1588. We can now see why each big war effort was followed by a lull of 2 or 3 years; it was to allow the Exchequer to recuperate. Elizabeth and Burghley were far too wise to borrow recklessly and fall into bankruptcy as the French monarchy had done. So far from the Great Elizabethan War being a half-hearted affair and the English armies a mere handful of gaol birds (which is what Sir John Fortescue says), we now see that it was a colossal national effort as great if not greater than ours in 1914-1918, and that it was conducted by the Queen and Lord Burghley with the utmost vigour, the only limiting factor being finance. I think the way the Exchequer was kept solvent during the 17 war years, and handed over solvent to King James, together with a defeated Spain and a crushed Ireland, is the most remarkable achievement in English history.

Upon the opposite page I print a diagram, prepared by Capt. Ward, in which the yearly ratio of revenue to war-expenditure is clearly shewn, together with, on the right hand side of the page, the corresponding, and deeply significant, dates of certain historical plays presented during those years—a conjunction of facts which brings us, at once, to the very heart of the matter.

We saw that when, in the autumn of 1585, an expedition, opening the Spanish War, was sent to the Low Countries, Lord Oxford, at first appointed to the command of the Horse, was, almost immediately, and somewhat mysteriously, recalled. Eight months later, in June, 1586, the Earl received a Privy Seal Warrant, signed by the Queen, authorizing "Our right trustie and right welbeloved Cousin the Earle of Oxford" to

*Capt. Ward's Note.*—I have just come across a remarkable confirmation of my table. My figures (which I have said are an *under*-estimate if anything) give the war expenditure as £4,763,000. E. P. Cheyney, "History of England," Vol. II, p. 244, quotes an *anonymous* MS. in S. P. Domestic, as saying that Elizabeth's war expenditure was £4,978,000!


ANGLO-SPANISH WAR 1585-1604.
CAMPAIGNS
FINANCE
PROPAGANDA
£600 400 200 Thousands
NAVAL & MILITARY EXPENDITURE
REVENUE
REVENUE
1604 Peace signed
1603
1602
1601
1600
1599
1598 Tyrone's Rebellion
1597 The Islands Voyage
1596 Cadiz
1595
1594
1593
1592
1591 Ex. Forces France etc
1590
1589
1588 The Armada
1587
1586 Zutphen
1585 Ex. Force Low Countries
1584
Merry Wives
2 Henry IV
Henry V
Henry IX
Richard II
3 Henry VI
The True Tragedy of R III
Edward I. II. III.
Contention of Y&L
Henry VI
The Troublesome Reign of K.J.
The Massacre at Paris
The Famous Victories of H. V.
£600 400 200 Thousands

receive £1,000 a year from the Exchequer, as from the previous March; the wording of the warrant being the same as that used in secret service payments, and the Exchequer officials being expressly forbidden to call for any account of its expenditure by the recipient. "We know," moreover, writes Capt. Ward, "that it was granted for some state service, because it is not included in the ordinary annuities, in Part I of the Exchequer accounts, but is entered in Part XIII, which consists of *payments to the heads of the various state departments*.[1] And Lord Oxford received the grant regularly from 1586–1604—a period which corresponds exactly with the duration of the Anglo-Spanish War.

Now these are very remarkable, and even extraordinary, facts; whether we consider the amount of the annuity, or the circumstances in which it was granted. No such other sum—amounting in present purchasing power, to nearly £15,000 a year,—had ever before been bestowed by the Queen, upon any individual of less than royal rank; as the reader may see by referring to Capt. Ward's "Life of the Seventeenth Earl of Oxford";[2] and the question at once arises—for what purpose did a somewhat parsimonious queen, at a time of soaring national expenditure, thus extravagantly commit the national purse? Col. and Capt. Ward's answer, in which I venture to concur, is that the money was paid in return for important services, to be rendered, by Oxford, to the state. What form were such services likely to take? The reply must be, that our now comparatively large knowledge of Oxford's temperament, predilections, abilities, and life generally, all point emphatically to literature, and to drama, as the only means by which he could conceivably deserve the large emoluments that were to be his, for the remainder of his life; since even those who utterly reject the idea

[1] I have italicized these highly significant words.

[2] Henry, the Eighteenth Earl, after his father's death, got £200 a year.

of any connection whatever between Shakespeare and Oxford, must admit the force of such contemporary evidence as that given by Lord Lumley, in "The Art of English Poesie" (1598), that "For Tragedie Ld. Buckhurst and Master Edward Ferrys do deserve the highest price (? praise); the Earl of Oxford and Master Edwards of Her Majestys chapel for Comedy and Enterlude"; and of Francis Meres, nine years later, in "Palladis Tamia" (1598); "The best for comedy among us be Edward Earl of Oxford."[1] I am aware that one Shakesperean scholar, at least—Professor Connes—whose opinion carries weight, has argued[2] that such remarks were intended to apply only to the amateurs, and not to professional dramatists; to which I would answer that, in the decade which we are considering, there was no sufficiently precise distinction between the playwrights of one class and the other, for any such reservation to apply; that being precisely one of the reasons why the aristocrats were so chary of allowing their names to appear.[3] The weight of evidence, on the whole, seems to point to the conclusion, that courtiers and commoners alike, with or without collaboration, anonymously, or under a name that may, or may not, have been their own, contributed, generally, to the common fund of our national drama; the Wards' very plausible hypothesis being, that the remarkable unanimity of thought, manner, and sentiment, noted by Mr. Harold Bayley, and to which I called attention in the opening pages of this chapter, is accounted for by the fact that a group of these dramatists, and men-of-letters, were

[1] The great Shakesperean tragedies, dating mainly from a short time before and after the Essex Conspiracy, were not completed in 1598. "Twelfth Night," a comedy that hovers on the brink of tragedy, dating, in its final form, almost from that year.

[2] "De Nouveau sur de Vere." "Revue Anglo-Américaine," February, 1929.

[3] It is, I think, arguable that there were no strictly professional playwrights in Elizabeth's day. Many made money by writing for the stage; but they all wrote other things besides, as and when occasion offered.

working together, under instructions, and superintendence, of a secret Committee, appointed by the Queen and Government, as a propaganda department during the great war.

Such an assumption may appear, at first glance, to be fantastic; but examination shews it to be, in the circumstances, extremely natural, fitting in well with the known facts, and, moreover, exactly paralleled by the recent great war, during which a Press Bureau, for Censorship, was shortly followed by the organization of a Propaganda Bureau, of which the principal duty was to maintain the national morale, and to foster a spirit of national loyalty. I think it more than probable, therefore, that the Wards are right, when they suggest that Queen Elizabeth, and her Ministers, fully aware of the ever-growing popularity of the stage, and, consequently, of its increasing value, as a means of propaganda, set up a secret committee, with the highly salaried Oxford as its author-in-chief, and Bacon, perhaps, as chief editor, to bring all the leading dramatists of the day substantially into line; Oxford being especially commissioned to produce a series of historical dramas, somewhat anti-Catholic in tendency—in view of the official religions of England and Spain—strongly supporting the Lancastrian party, with which the Queen and Oxford, alike, were both, by ancestry, closely identified; and hotly attacking the Yorkists; a good example of this last being the anti-Yorkist play, "Richard III," wherein Richard, in defiance of historical fact,[1] is represented as a kind of devil—a distortion of truth that becomes perfectly comprehensible, when we remember that the Thirteenth Earl, the greatest of all the mediæval Earls of Oxford,—whose estates had been confiscated in the first year of Richard III—was the most prominent Lancastrian figure at the Battle of Bosworth, and carried the sword-of-state at Richmond's coronation as Henry VII. The whole

[1] See The Rehabilitation of Richard III, by Sir Clements Markham.

of the historical plays of Shakespeare become far more interesting, and, moreover, far more easily explicable, when we realize that Oxford's ancestors, and predecessors in the Earldom, played prominent parts in many vitally important events of English history, from Hastings to Bosworth field, including the Battles of the Crusades, Crécy, Poitiers, Agincourt, and the Wars of the Roses, together with the baronial struggles for liberty against King John, culminating in the Magna Charter; the revolt of the de Montfort party against Edward I, and the suppression of Wat Tyler's Rebellion.

If my readers will ponder a little over these facts, and weigh them with the tables and figures, given in this book, with which Capt. Ward's industry and abilities have supplied us, they will, I think, agree that I have, in all probability, set down here, with sufficient accuracy, the principal underlying motives, and reasons, for the development of this mysterious Elizabethan drama, along the lines that we are considering.

But, whatever the explanation, it is undeniable that a long series of intensely national, and patriotic, war-plays began to appear—one of the earliest being "The Famous Victories of King Henry V," which, crude as it is, and, quite evidently the work of a young, and immature, man, is interesting, in connection with this study of ours, because of its indisputably close connection with Oxford. Capt. Ward's theory is, that one of Oxford's first activities, after entering upon his new office, was to rewrite "The Famous Victories," of which he may, years before, have been the author; and to get it acted, as we know that it was, by Tarleton and the Queen's company, some time before 1588. The sequel was a torrent of patriotic historical dramas, of which at least fifteen, including nine attributed to "Shakespeare," were written between about 1590 and 1600. These are by no means mere propaganda plays; their primary object being, evidently, to amuse, and to entertain; but, as Col. Ward has pointed out, a wide range of warlike

propaganda is easily discernible in the Chronicle plays, including the invincibility of British arms, as dealt with in " The Famous Victories," " Henry V," " Edward I " ; the encouragement of patriotism, and of anti-Catholicism, in " The Troublesome Reign," and " King John " ; the punishment of disloyalty, as shewn by the fate of the regicide, Mortimer, in " Edward II " ; inducements towards loyalty to the reigning Elizabethan house—the Tudor dynasty being of Lancastrian origin—as shewn in the exaltation of the Lancastrians, and vilifying of Yorkists, in " The Contention," " The True Tragedy," " Henry VI," and " Richard III." Further, the doom of the rebels is exemplified by the collapse of Cade's rebellion, in " Henry VI," and the anti-Spanish propaganda in " Edward I."

Very pertinent also is the following paragraph, from the same article, pointing out remarkable analogies between the world-war of 1914, and our long Elizabethan struggle against Spain.

When we compare the Elizabethan stage during the Spanish War with our own during the Great War, it is curious to find a very close parallel in the case of two favourite soldier characters. Old Bill, as a representative of the men affectionately known as " the Old Contemptibles," is characteristically an English hero by the very absence of the obviously heroic virtues. None the less is he the best-known symbol of the finest Army that ever left our shores. Falstaff in the same way represents one of the many captains whose deeds have been mostly forgotten, but who carried on the professional soldierly tradition, under Lord Oxford's famous cousins, the " Fighting Veres," his brother-in-law, the " Brave Lord Willoughby," and his old colleague-in-arms, Sir John Norris. Falstaff himself—as we now know from Mr. John Dawtrey's book, " The Falstaff Saga "—had a flesh-and-blood prototype in a fine—though corpulent —soldier, Captain Nicholas Dawtrey, who did excellent work in preparing the levies in 1588, and who died on

active service in Ireland in 1601. Falstaff is just as much the heroic Elizabethan captain as Old Bill is the heroic soldier of the retreat from Mons. Their foibles and humours were never intended to detract from their sterling qualities. We laugh at and with them, but we love them all the same; recognizing that they are kindly caricatures of men whose virtue, in the Roman sense, was real and solid. Nor does the parallel between Old Bill and Falstaff finish with their war-time adventures. Shortly after 1918, a play was produced in London called "The Better 'Ole." This play represented Old Bill, demobilized and back again in the bosom of his family, as the happy and contented proprietor of a public house. And there is a well-known tradition that about 1602 (when the Spanish War was virtually over) Queen Elizabeth expressed a desire to see Falstaff in love, and that Shakespeare obliged her by writing "The Merry Wives of Windsor," which represented Old Jack back once more amongst the ladies of Windsor.

Certainly, as Capt. B. M. Ward has pointed out, there is a very happy analogy between Old Bill seeking physical safety underground, and Jack Falstaff shamming death, after the Battle of Shrewsbury.

On July 7, 1594, Oxford wrote to Burleigh concerning "Sundry abuses whereby Her Majesty and myself were in my office greatly hindered"—a phrase fitting in perfectly well with the hypothesis raised by Col. Ward; and it is precisely when the imagined circumstances, and intelligent inferences, are jointly corroborated by discovery, that the enquirer may feel well assured that he is not far from the direct line of truth. Thus much being granted, the theory of a secret committee charged with the preparation of patriotic-politico-military propaganda, circulated principally, though not wholly, through the medium of the stage, throws strong light upon a number of phenomena, not easily explicable in any other way. Plays, and personalities connected therewith, thus viewed, slip naturally, and without any twisting of

circumstance, into the niches prepared for them. Among the plays, for example, " Titus Andronicus," a tragedy first published anonymously in 1594, and certainly the work of more than one hand, provides a title-page of which the wording runs

> The Most Lamentable Romaine Tragedie of Titus Andronicus. As it was plaide by the Right Honourable the Earle of Darbie, Earle of Pembroke, and Earl of Sussex their servants.[1]

" Assuming," writes Col. Ward, " that the Elizabethan stage was a purely competitive peace-time concern, with each company of actors jealously guarding its stock-in-trade, it is quite inexplicable that ' Titus Andronicus,' by whomsoever written, was acted openly, and indiscriminately, by three rival companies " ; but if due weight be given to the warlike propaganda with which many of these plays, either open, or close, or both, and which, in this particular play, is represented by such lines as (I, 2) :—

> Romans, make way : the good Andronicus,
> Patron of virtue, Rome's best champion
> With honour and with fortune is return'd
> From where he circumscribed with his sword,
> And brought to yoke the enemies of Rome—

the understanding, that seems to have existed, between the companies of the Earls of Derby, Pembroke, and Sussex [2] is much more easily accounted for.

Other plays, also, explain themselves far more readily, and naturally, than has been the case hitherto, if we assume that a committee of prominent persons was behind these dramatic activities. Professor Lefranc, for example, in his " Sous le Masque de William Shakespeare," has argued that the Earl of Derby was the actual author of " Love's Labour's Lost." He has shewn that

[1] Shakespeare Fellowship, Sixth Annual Report, 1928.

[2] Derby was Oxford's son-in-law ; Sussex, with whom he had served in the rising in the North (1569), was a close friend of Oxford ; and Pembroke also had family connections with the Oxfords.

the play presents a sympathetic picture of the Court of Navarre, accurate in all its details, and that Lord Derby, before he succeeded to the Earldom, visited the Court of Navarre, during the 'eighties. Now "The Famous Victories," depicting, for propagandist purposes, no doubt, a defeated King of France swearing fealty to a victorious King of England, was acted, in London, some time before 1588. But 1589 brought a change in the political situation; when the Catholic King of France, Henry III, was assassinated, and succeeded upon the throne by a Protestant, Henry of Navarre. He at once formed an alliance with Queen Elizabeth, who sent expeditionary forces to Normandy, and Brittany, in order to co-operate with him against the French Catholics who were allied with the Spaniards. Col. Ward, therefore, may, very probably, be right, when he suggests that a play called "The French Comedy," recorded by Henslowe in his Diary as having been frequently presented by him in the early 'nineties, was really "Love's Labour's Lost," which is generally supposed to have been written about 1590, and was printed in 1598, with the name of William Shakespeare on the title page. We know that Lord Derby was a playwright; because he is described, in 1599, as "busied only in penning comedies for the common players"; and, in this connection, it is pertinent to remember that he was Lord Oxford's son-in-law, and close friend. I do not, for an instant, agree with Monsieur Lefranc, in attributing "Love's Labour's Lost" to Lord Derby; because the style of much of its dialogue, and its close textual, and inferential, connection with the sonnets, and also with "A Midsummer Night's Dream," give it, in my judgment, the unmistakable Oxfordian stamp; but it does seem very probable that, when Henry IV, on his accession to the French throne, became an ally of England, Lord Oxford took a principal hand in writing a pro-French comedy, and enlisted, for its fashioning, the valuable, and evidently practised, help of his son-in-law. Such a

hypothesis seems to square well with all the known facts, and the legitimate inferences, as I see them.

That Mysterious Northumberland MS. also, which has occasioned so much debate among Shakesperean students, becomes more comprehensible in the light of a theory that a secret committee had charge of the Shakesperean plays,[1] and that Bacon, in addition to Oxford and Derby, was among its most active members. Of this document, which seems to date from about 1596, the late Sir George Greenwood, in his edition of Baconian Essays, by E. W. Smithson, writes that " the manuscript volume contains, amongst other things, the transcript of certain compositions admittedly the work of Francis Bacon," with an outside sheet generally held to have been a sort of catalogue of the contents, among which are scribbled Bacon's own name, that of William Shakespeare, several times, a line from " The Rape of Lucrece," and, *inter alia*, the titles of two Shakesperean plays, " Richard II " and " Richard III." This MS., then, provides important evidence linking Bacon's name with that of Shakespeare; and—did we possess but a little more knowledge—might throw some light upon Bacon's much criticized behaviour, and methods, at the trial of the Earl of Essex; since, as I shewed in my last book, there are good grounds for suspecting Essex to be, in part, at least, the historic prototype of Richard II. One need not be a Baconian, in the usually accepted sense of that term, to realize that Bacon played, unquestionably, a considerable, and, probably, even a principal part in the editing of the Shakesperean plays, and had, almost certainly, a hand in some of the revisions. I have already noted Mr. Theobald's discovery of the Baconian signatures ciphered into the dedicatory page of the sonnets; and others, perhaps, lie hidden in what publishers call the " preliminaries," of the First Folio, including Jonson's lines " To the Reader."

[1] *Cf.* also the mysterious line in sonnet 45/66 complaining of " art made tongue-tied by authority."

Another point worth noting, in connection with this secret committee—if such it was—and with Oxford's annuity of £1,000 a year—which, for whatever purpose granted, he certainly received until his death—is, that the amount of the payment seems to account for the somewhat persistent rumours traditionally connecting Shakespeare's name with the receipt or expenditure of that sum: as, for instance, when in the early part of the 17th century the Rev. John Ward, Vicar of Stratford-on-Avon, in 1662, affirms that Shakespeare, in his last years, "spent at the rate of £1,000 a year, as I have heard." I think that William Shaxper—though not, I imagine, much given to writing—may have assisted Oxford, substantially, in putting on his plays, at the Globe; and, very rightly, saw to it that a portion of that £1,000 a year did actually find its way into his pocket.

It has been suggested to me, in several quarters, that the actor of Stratford may have helped Oxford, also, in writing some of the comic scenes into the plays. That conclusion I regard as very possible; but the two "William" scenes incorporated into "Merry Wives" and "As You Like It," which will be analyzed in a later chapter, and also that strangely enigmatic Introduction to "The Taming of the Shrew," afford, to my thinking, positive proof, that—though Oxford may have found it convenient, for the purposes of his incognito, to permit the actor to be regarded, by many contemporaries, as the actual author of the plays; and though Shaxper, apparently, was, in fact, laying claim to that authorship, in 1589—the Earl was fully determined that posterity, in due time, should discover the truth of the matter. An examination of some of the most interesting of the plays, through which, from an Oxfordian view-point, I will now endeavour to steer the reader, seems to me to supply very many, and deeply significant, corroborative proofs of that thesis.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OXFORD IN THE SHAKESPEREAN COMEDIES

"Love's Labour's Lost"—"Two Gentlemen of Verona"—"The Comedy of Errors"—"A Midsummer Night's Dream"—"The Taming of the Shrew"—"The Merry Wives of Windsor."

SINCE this book, for economic reasons, must be kept within a moderate length, it will be impossible for me to examine, in these pages, the whole of the Shakesperean plays, in relation to Oxford as their probable author, supposing, even, that I were sufficiently informed to do so, which, at the moment, I am not. It is, however, my intention, beginning with the comedies, to select a few of the more important, and to shew how fully, and accurately, some of them repeat, in phrase and outlook, the method of the writer of the sonnets; and how clearly, and closely, many of them adhere to the known facts and circumstances of Oxford's life. I shall further shew that several of them are strewn with carefully written, ingenious, cipher-sentences, and symbolic passages, spoken by characters representing Oxford personally, or standing for, or in some relation to, his plays, and referring enigmatically, yet quite recognizably, to the secret authorship, in terms that vary between the vilely punning word-play of the young bloods, in "Romeo and Juliet," and the nobly prophetic utterances of a lofty soul, dedicated to his country's service, and confident of ultimate recognition and vindication, as expressed by Kent in "King Lear."

## "LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST"

The first point to be noticed, in this comedy, is its almost exact consonance with the sonnets, and with the theory of those sonnets, as set forth in Chapter VI of this book, wherein I shewed that the earlier ones were probably written a year or so after Oxford's second marriage, in 1591, to Elizabeth Trentham, who is the dark lady, and whose son, Henry, afterwards Eighteenth Earl of Oxford, is the youth to whom, in general, they are addressed. These sonnets, moreover, we have seen to contain a number of attacks upon the "rival poet," George Chapman, which, as I have already shewn, are continued—sometimes in almost identical words—in several scenes of "Love's Labour's Lost." [1]

Now the approximate date generally given to "Love's Labour's Lost," namely *circa* 1591, coincides, as we should expect, very nearly with that of the first sonnets; and both works, quite obviously, are from the hand of an aristocrat; sonnet 2/91, which opens :—

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill—

being, as I have already shewn, a catalogue of glories available to wealthy noblemen, but not to humble immigrants to London, from Stratford-upon-Avon. Further, it is, I suggest, impossible to deny, upon a careful reading, that "Love's Labour's Lost" is, likewise, the work of a man profoundly intimate with court life, and interested, at bottom, in little else; that the play, in fact, reveals an easy command of the patrician manner, and a wholly court-imbued mentality quite impossible to a youth who had come up from the country, only some six years before—a difficulty which Mr. Arthur Gray has endeavoured, very ingeniously, to account for, in his book, "A Chapter in the Early Life of Shakespeare." It is, however, generally admitted that the hand that wrote the sonnets wrote also the plays, and, since my case

[1] See ante pp. 103–105.

for Oxford, as author of those sonnets, seems to me to have been made out, in Chapter VI, it is interesting to find that no single fact, or inference, seems authoritatively to challenge the wider assertion, that Oxford wrote also "Love's Labour's Lost," which, in addition to a multitude of rhymed lines, contains, also, three sonnets and a song.

Now let us turn, for a moment, to the theme of the comedy; and see whether that also links itself up, naturally, with the other parts of our case? The answer is, that it does; for a fact begins at once to emerge, that will come out more clearly still, when we pass on to "Twelfth Night"—and will develop full significance in our coming examination of the great tragedies—that Shakespeare, in play after play, concerns himself with the Medici family; either in the person of Catherine herself, when Queen-Mother of the French court, or with her sons, or daughters, or sons or daughters-in-law, and with momentous events in their lives, occurring during the late fifteen sixties, or early 'seventies, at some principal European court, at a time when Oxford was in early manhood, though the Stratford actor was not yet out of his teens.

Catherine's relatives, in "Love's Labour's Lost," are the King of Navarre, and the Princess of France, otherwise her son-in-law, and daughter, Henry of Navarre and Marguerite de Valois, to whom the former was married in Paris, in 1572, just before the Massacre of St. Bartholomew; the death of the King of France, referred to in the last scene of the play, being that of Marguerite's brother, Charles IX, which occurred in 1574.

The Medici family, of course, were all well known to Oxford, who was among the strong supporters of the proposed marriage between Alençon and Queen Elizabeth, and who visited the French court, and talked personally with the French king, Henry III, on his way to Italy in 1575—a journey that included Florence, the

home of the Medicis, which Oxford visited in 1576. Florence, moreover, is the capital of Tuscany, and this Franco-Italian influence upon Oxford, evident in so many of the plays, and his consequent interest in persons, and events, connected with the Medici family—such, for example, as the Massacre of St. Bartholomew [1]—accounts, at once, for the gibes at this "Mirror of Tuscany," aimed, as we have seen, at Oxford-Shakespeare, by Gabriel Harvey,[2] who, quite certainly, is caricatured, in his turn, by Shakespeare, under cover of "Holofernes," in the very play that we are now concerned with—"Love's Labour's Lost." Mr. J. T. Looney has pointed out [3] that the name, Holofernes, like that of "Hobbinol," under which Harvey appears in Spenser's works, is a rough anagram of Harvey's Christian and surnames—the fact that Harvey had been a former protégé of Oxford's accounting, possibly, for the use of the strong epithet, "kissing traitor."

Biron, the satirist, stands for Shakespeare himself; and in addition to Biron—who later becomes the principal figure in Chapman's double "Biron" play—we have Longaville and Dumain, the slightly disguised names of French generals of the time. Henri de Longueville, Duke of Orleans, was a friend to Henry of Navarre, before becoming chief of the Catholic League.[4] The relationship, by marriage, between Oxford and the Earl of Derby, and their almost certain joint interest in "Love's Labour's Lost," I have already pointed out; and I may as well note here, that the pageant of "Nine

[1] See post pp. 355–56 dealing with "King Lear."

[2] See ante pp. 115–117. Harvey's denial, in his third letter (Grosart I, 183) that he aimed his "Mirrour of Tuscanimo" at Oxford, I find wholly unconvincing. There is no other individual whom the attack fits so well.

[3] "Shakespeare Identified," pp. 291-293. It shall not, however, be overlooked that the name "Holofernes" occurs in Rabelais.

[4] In an early play, such as this, Shakespeare, it will be observed, openly names his historic originals; in later work he usually conceals the actual name; though often hinting at it, by means of a rough anagram as, for example, when Elizabeth becomes Olivia, or "Valoii," which she would have been, had she married Alençon.

Worthies," in the fifth act of the comedy, has a close analogy in the pageant given at Chester, in Lord Derby's home county, in the fifteen-eighties. Still further to connect this relative, and friend, of Oxford's with Navarre, I must remind readers that William Stanley, aged 21 in 1582, went, that year, to Paris, was received, as Oxford had been, at the court of Henry III, and afterwards travelled through France, to Navarre: and that Henry Stanley, the Fourth Earl, was succeeded in the title by William's brother, Ferdinando, in 1593—facts which may help to account for the name of Ferdinand given to the King of Navarre in "Love's Labour's Lost."

## "TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA"

If, on grounds of general probability, "Love's Labour's Lost" be set down as Shakespeare's first play, we may, I think, with some assurance, put down "Two Gentlemen of Verona" as his second; and here again we shall find many, and interesting, allusions, fitting in, exactly, with the Oxford theory of authorship, and largely accounted for by the young Earl's zest for travel, to which reference has already been made in this book. The following duologue, between Panthino and Antonio (I, 3), is wholly applicable to the circumstances, and character, of Oxford, at that time.[1]

PAN. He (Proteus) wonder'd that your lordship
Would suffer him to spend his youth at home,
While other men, of slender reputation,
Put forth their sons to seek preferment out:
Some to the wars, to try their fortune there;
Some to discover islands far away;
Some to the studious universities.
For any, or for all these exercises,
He said that Proteus your son was meet;
And did request me to importune you
To let him spend his time no more at home,
Which would be great impeachment to his age,
In having known no travel in his youth.
ANT. Nor need'st thou much importune me to that
Whereon this month I have been hammering.
I have consider'd well his loss of time,
And how he cannot be a perfect man,
Not being tried and tutor'd in the world:
Experience is by industry achiev'd,
And perfected by the swift course of time.
Then tell me, whither were it best to send him?
PAN. I think your lordship is not ignorant
How his companion, youthful Valentine,
Attends the Emperor in his royal court.
ANT. I know it well.

[1] Pointed out by J. T. Looney, "Shakespeare Identified," pp. 268-270.

PAN. 'Twere good, I think, your lordship sent him thither:
There shall he practise tilts and tournaments,
Hear sweet discourse, converse with noblemen,
And be in eye of every exercise
Worthy his youth and nobleness of birth.
ANT. I like thy counsel; well hast thou advised:

I will dispatch him to the Emperor's court.

All this is "pure Oxford," even to the tilts and tournaments, in which the young Earl, a fine horseman, excelled.[1] And the comedy contains other very autobiographical passages, as when, in IV, 1, Valentine,[2] travelling from Milan to Verona, is captured, and catechized, by the outlaws, and tells them that he has been staying at Milan sixteen months—a period which, though it does not fit in well with the action of the play, is just about the duration of Oxford's stay in Italy.[3] Nor should it be overlooked that Oxford, returning from that same Italian trip, was captured, in the Channel, by pirates, and robbed of his baggage—an incident that seems to be recorded again in "Hamlet," IV, 6. Further—and this, perhaps, is the most striking of all these analogies—it was on his return from this same journey, that Oxford presented, to Queen Elizabeth, a "sweet ornament," otherwise a pair of perfumed gloves, recalled, it seems, in this passage (II, 1) between Valentine (Oxford) and Speed.

*Milan. A Room in the Duke's Palace.*
*Enter Valentine and Speed.*

SPEED (*picking up a glove*). Sir, your glove.
VAL. Not mine; my gloves are on.
SPEED. Why, then this may be yours, for this is but one.

[1] See Ward's "Oxford," p. 56.
[2] The English Ambassador in Paris, in 1575, was named Valentine Dale.
[3] Capt. Holland's "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," p. 30.

VAL. Ha, let me see: ay, give it me, it's mine:—
Sweet ornament that decks a thing divine!
Ah, Silvia, Silvia!

Here one can see the actor scenting and kissing the perfumed gloves, of which Stow, in his Annals, had written thus:—

> Oxford came from Italy, and brought with him gloves, sweet bags . . . and other pleasant things—

lines which become still more significent if the reader will accept my suggestion that Silvia is, in part, at least, none other than Queen Elizabeth herself!

That Oxford, in his early days as courtier, was, or had to pretend to be, in love with his queen, may be taken for granted; royal infatuation being then an indispensable preliminary to court advancement: and I feel confident, though it be not indisputably demonstrable, that the relations described, in "Two Gentlemen of Verona," between Valentine and Silvia, recall certain actual incidents, that took place between Oxford and Elizabeth in the late 'sixties or early 'seventies, before his travels abroad. That the queen and her ward were on good terms, is a matter of history; since we know that Gilbert Talbot wrote to his father, the Earl of Shrewsbury, on May 11, 1572,

> My Lord of Oxford is lately grown into great credit, for the Queens Majesty delighteth more in his personage, and his dancing, and his valiantness than any other.

We have seen in an earlier chapter that the Venus, of "Venus and Adonis,"[1] was, probably, a disguised personification of Elizabeth; and, in this play also, Silvia, throughout, is addressed, almost, as a goddess—as the queen, of course, frequently was—and is the object of a stilted exaggeration of phrase, wholly consonant with the accepted mode of flattering the Virgin lady. Here are some examples.

[1] My interpretation of "Venus and Adonis," if correct, makes it almost certain that there had been "love-business," or flirtation of some kind, between Oxford and Queen Elizabeth.

VAL. Her beauty is exquisite, but her favour infinite.[1] (II, 1.)

VAL. Those high-imperious thoughts have punish'd me
With bitter fasts, with penitential groans. (II, 4.)

VAL. Even she; and is she not a heavenly saint?

PROT. No; but she is an earthly paragon.

VAL. Call her divine.

PRO. I will not flatter her.

VAL. O, flatter me; for love delights in praise.

PRO. When I was sick, you gave me bitter pills;
And I must minister the like to you.

VAL. Then speak the truth by her: if not divine,
Yet let her be a principality,
Sovereign to all the creatures on the Earth.

all I can is nothing
To her whose worth makes other worthies nothing.
She is alone. (II, 4.)

PRO. Now I worship a celestial sun (i.e. Silvia). (II, 6.)

DUKE (*reading Valentine's letter to Silvia*).
*Silvia, this night I will enfranchise thee.*
'Tis so; and here's the ladder for the purpose.
Why, Phaethon,—for thou art Merops' son,
Wilt thou aspire to guide the heavenly car,
And with thy daring folly burn the world?
Wilt thou reach stars, because they shine on thee?

All this seems to me to be full of an occult meaning, that can be intelligently interpreted only on the assumption that, by Silvia, is meant Queen Elizabeth. Phrases such as :—

let her be a principality[2]
Sovereign to all the creatures on the earth—

are too high flown to be applicable to young ladies, however deeply adored, unless they be queens, or of other exalted estate!

[1] My theory is, I think, strengthened by the fact that Speed, immediately afterwards, mocks at Silvia's painted face. There are many contemporary references to the Queen's "make-up": and Speed's gibe, quite characteristic of "Shakespeare," in itself suggests a contemporary historic original.

[2] A "principality" is an angel of high order.

Moreover, the phrase :—

> Silvia, this night I will enfranchise thee,

with its natural implications, when spoken by her lover, reminds one, immediately, of the passage in III, 1, of "Loves's Labour's Lost," between Armado and Costard :—

> ARM. Sirrah Costard, I will enfranchise thee.
> COST. O, marry me to one Frances. I smell some l'envoy, some goose, in this.

which also refers, almost certainly, to Queen Elizabeth, seeing that "Frances" can hardly be aimed at any other than Francis of Alençon, the queen's suitor, who, certainly, was made a goose of, by the royal lady—the word "enfranchise," in that instance, meaning, I take it, "I will Frenchify, or make a Frenchman, of thee."

As for the three lines :—

> Wilt thou aspire to guide the heavenly car,
> And with thy daring folly burn the world ?
> Wilt thou reach stars because they shine on thee ?—

they are just such as the maturing Oxford might write of his rash young self of twenty years before, who was fool enough, it seems, to think that, because the star, Elizabeth, shone awhile on him, he could attain her in perpetuity, by way of marriage.

Further similarly significant passages follow.

> VAL. (Silvia) is my essence ; and I leave to be,
> If I be not by her fair influences
> Foster'd, illumin'd, cherish'd, kept alive.
> I fly not death, to fly this deadly doom. (III, 1.)—

words that seem to hint at such advancement as royal patronage alone can give ; and, if I am right, makes the more striking and comprehensible Oxford's constant lamentations, in private life, as well as in the character of Hamlet, over the lack of that earnestly coveted, and, at one time, assuredly hoped-for advancement.

Finally there is the song to Silvia, in IV, 2—

Then to Silvia let us sing,
That Silvia is excelling ;
She excels each mortal thing
Upon the dull earth dwelling—

which is wholly in the same vein and seems to have been suggested, in part, by the " Song to Apollo," written, probably by Oxford, into Lyly's play " Midas." [1] Both Proteus and Valentine, it should be noted, are in love with Silvia ; and all three men, including even the Duke, speak of her as Elizabeth alone was spoken of.

But the clues, and parallels, do not end here ; for " Two Gentlemen," as is generally admitted, is borrowed from, and echoed, in many of the later plays, including " The Taming of the Shrew," and " Romeo and Juliet," but no less strongly in " Twelfth Night," wherein, as I shewed in my last book,[2] Olivia is Queen Elizabeth, and Orsino is Francis of Alençon, with more than a dash of Oxford thrown in. Now a careful examination of " Two Gentlemen " shews, I think, beyond doubt, many interesting analogies with " Twelfth Night," especially in Acts IV and V. Julia becomes Sebastian (the name of Viola's brother) when, like Viola, she disguises herself as a boy, and enters the service of Proteus, who is a friend to Valentine, who has, in part, the same historic original as Orsino, namely Oxford himself. Julia is sent (IV, 2) to Silvia, with a ring, just as Olivia—who, like Silvia, is Elizabeth—pretends that Orsino has sent her a ring, by Viola ; and, in return for that ring, Julia is to receive Silvia's picture, whereupon Julia, immediately after Proteus' exit, utters a complaint that might, almost, have been spoken by, and seems certainly to foreshadow Viola, before her mission to Olivia.

And now am I—unhappy messenger—
To plead for that which I would not obtain ;
To carry that which I would have refused ;
To praise his faith which I would have dispraised.

[1] See ante pp. 63–65.

[2] " Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," cap. III, pp. 16–24.

I am my master's true confirmed love;
But cannot be true servant to my master,
Unless I prove false traitor to myself.
Yet will I woo for him. . . .

There follows the interview with Silvia, and all the business of bringing her picture, which, again, is repeated in "Twelfth Night," when Olivia before withdrawing her veil, says :—

We will draw the curtain, and shew you the picture.

Further, Silvia's lines, that almost immediately follow :—

I will not look upon your master's lines.
I know they're stuff'd with protestations,
And full of new found oaths—

is still in the vein of the early scenes of "Twelfth Night," while the duologue that follows, between Silvia and Julia, has evident parallels with the talks between Orsino and Viola, as witness the following:

| "TWO GENTLEMEN." | "TWELFTH NIGHT," II, 4. |
|---|---|
| SIL. Is she not passing fair? | DUKE. What kind of woman is't? |
| JUL. She hath been fairer, madam, than she is. | VIOL. Of your complexion. |
| When she did think my master loved her well, | VIOL. She never told her love |
| She, in my judgment, was as fair as you; | But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud, |
| But, since she did neglect her looking glass, | Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought |
| And threw her sun-expelling mask away, | And with a green and yellow melancholy She sat . . . |
| The air hath starved the roses in her cheeks | DUKE. For women are as roses, whose fair flower |
| And pinch'd the lily-tincture of her face, | Being once display'd, doth fall that very hour. |
| That now she is become as black as I. | |
| SILV. Alas, poor lady, desolate and left! | CLOWN. Lay me, O, where, Sad true lover never find my grave, |
| I weep myself to think upon thy words. | To weep there. |

Here the analogies of situation, image, thought, and word—with others that one could cite—are too striking

to be overlooked. Exactly as in " Twelfth Night," you have the girl, disguised as a boy, and crossed in love, speaking of herself and of her secret sorrows, to a sympathetic listener, who is unaware of her identity with the person spoken of, and, like Olivia, is loved by the individual whom the seeming page boy serves. Further, we have Orsino, in one case, and Silvia, in the other, asking questions about the lady of whom the page is speaking. How tall was she ? Of what complexion ? etc. These resemblances, cohering together so closely, can hardly be coincidences; and I would here further point out that, not only, as we have seen, is Silvia royally spoken of, just as Olivia is in the phrases " sovereign throne," " queen of gems," and so forth; but she also speaks royally of herself, with such lines as :—

Upon some other pawn for fealty—

and when she appears at her window, after the " Who is Silvia ? " song, says :—

For me—by this pale Queen of night, I swear—

the royal metaphor coming readily to her lips, in a scene, which, as I have already shewn, seems to foreshadow a parallel scene in " Twelfth Night."

A last, and, in my judgment, very strong piece of confirmatory evidence, is to be found in V, 4, where Silvia, after exclaiming :—

O, Heaven, be judge how I love Valentine !—

continues :—

I do detest false perjured Proteus !
Therefore be gone, solicit me no more.

Immediately upon reading those lines, I was reminded of a song I had read, among Mr. J. T. Looney's collection of Oxford's poems, namely the " Verses Ascribed to Queen Elizabeth " :

When I was fair and young then favour graced me;
Of many was I sought their mistress for to be.
But I did scorn them all, and answered them therefore,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more.

How many weeping eyes I made to pine in woe;
How many sighing hearts I have no skill to show;
Yet I the prouder grew, and answered them therefore,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more.

Then spake fair Venus' son, that proud victorious boy,
And said, you dainty dame, since that you be so coy,
I will so pluck your plumes, that you shall say no more,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more.

When he had spake these words such change grew in my breast,
That neither night nor day I could take any rest.
Then lo! I did repent, that I had said before,
Go, go, go, seek some otherwhere,
Importune me no more.

E. of O.

The tenour of these verses, admittedly written by the Earl of Oxford, during his young days at court—though originally ascribed to Queen Elizabeth herself—make it about as certain as anything can be, that the woman spoken of is none other than the queen, and that "fair Venus' son, that proud victorious boy," who decided to "pluck the plumes" of his "dainty dame," is Oxford himself, a supposition strongly borne out by what I have already written concerning "Venus and Adonis," and the relation of Oxford and Elizabeth to that poem; and further supported by the reminder, these verses afford, of the obduracy of Rosaline in "Romeo and Juliet," whom I believe also to have Queen Elizabeth for her historic original. Further, as we have seen, Silvia's line in "Two Gentlemen"

Therefore begone, solicit me no more—

seems, once more, definitely to link Oxford and Elizabeth with Valentine and Silvia of "Two Gentlemen." My impression is that such a line in the play as Speed's, spoken of Silvia :—

Herself hath taught her love himself to write unto her lover—

a lover whom Valentine has just described as "the secret, nameless friend of yours"—together with Proteus' advice to Sir Thurio—

You must lay lime to tangle her desire
By wailful sonnets, whose composed rhymes
Should be full fraught with serviceable vows—

still reflect actual incidents that happened among the company of courtiers about the queen.

Launce's words, to Proteus :—

LAUNCE. Sir, there is a proclamation that you are vanish'd.

PROTE. That thou art banished—O, that's the news—
From hence, from Silvia, and from me thy friend

may, very probably, be another twisted reminiscence of Oxford's escapade of 1574, when he left the court, without notice or permission, and "vanished" into Flanders ; [1] and I think it possible that the slandering of Oxford, by Lord Henry Howard, which brought him back from France, in 1576, is recalled in the next scene (III, 2), wherein Proteus suggests that the best way to alienate the affection of Silvia from Valentine, is to slander him,

With falsehood, cowardice and poor descent,—
Three things that women highly hold in hate.

Further evidence that, when he wrote this play, Oxford's mind was running upon the years 1574–76, is, perhaps, supplied by the fact which Capt. Holland has pointed out, in "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," that

[1] See Ward's "Oxford," pp. 93–97.

a word very rare in Shakespeare, "Metamorphose," is twice used in this play, perhaps through the influence, upon Oxford's mind, of his uncle, and former tutor, Arthur Golding's edition of Ovid's "Metamorphoses," published in 1575, only one year before his "Life of Jasper Coligny," which we shall see Oxford using for "King Lear." This rendering, according to Sir Sidney Lee, "had been one of Shakespeare's best loved books in youth, and definitely affected Shakespeare's phraseology, when he was borrowing from Ovid." [1]

In view of the intimate nature of this play, and of the exalted rank of persons so pointedly alluded to, it is not surprising that we have no record of any performance of "Two Gentlemen of Verona" during Shakespeare's life-time; and that it did not appear in print until the Folio of 1623.

[1] Quoted "Shakespeare Identified," p. 236. Mr. Looney, in his notes to Oxford's poem, "Love is a Discord," from "England's Parnassus" (1600), points out further interesting verbal parallels with "Two Gentlemen."

## "THE COMEDY OF ERRORS"

This comedy, also, is extremely interesting, from the Oxfordian view-point. The mention of Syracuse, by Duke Solinus, in the third line of the play, recalls Oxford's journey to Sicily, in 1576, when he probably visited Syracuse, as he certainly did Palermo,[1] the other large town upon the island. In the first scene of the second act, the speech of Luciana :—

> Why, headstrong liberty is lash'd with woe.
> There's nothing situate under heaven's eye
> But hath his bound, in earth, in sea, in sky.
> The beasts, the fishes, and the winged fowls,
> Are their males' subjects and at their controls—

while reading very like another reproof, from the maturing Oxford, of the extravagancies of Oxford the immature, is immediately comparable with the words of his poem, "Loss of Good Name"—

> Help men, help beasts, help birds and worms, that on the earth do toil,
> Help fish, help fowl, that flock and feed upon the salt sea soil—

while, as Mr. Looney has noted,[2] this act of the comedy contains numerous other ideas, and phrases, associated with Oxford's admitted writings. I would further add that the following lines, by Adriana, in this scene (II, 1), such as—

> A wretched soul bruised with adversity
>
> burden'd with like weight of pain,
> As much or more, we should ourselves complain :
> So thou, that hast no unkind mate to grieve thee,
> With urging helpless patience would'st relieve me :
> But, if thou live to see like right bereft,
> This fool-begg'd patience in thee will be left—

[1] Ward's "Oxford," pp. 111, 112.
[2] "Poems of Edward de Vere," p. 23.

seem to echo not only the "Loss of Good Name" poem, just quoted from, but also the next poem in Mr. Looney's book, "Revenge of Wrong"—

> Patience perforce in such a pinching pain.

I cannot, therefore, escape the conclusion that, in all these early plays, Oxford is harking back frequently to his yet earlier poems.

With the obvious connection between the closing scenes of the second act of "The Comedy of Errors," and "A Midsummer Night's Dream," I will deal when we come, in a moment, to the fairy play; but I must first call attention to a few more points of interest; the first of which is the presence, in this comedy, of the slander-motive:—

> For slander lives upon succession,
> Forever housed where it gets possession—

that is apparent in so many of the plays—Oxford, it seems, never, during his life being able to shake off the conviction that the slanders aimed at him by his cousin, Lord Henry Howard, during the crisis of 1576, were permanent, in their effects upon public opinion. Another interesting passage is III, 2, which, as Capt. Holland has pointed out, gives a key-date for the comedy.

> ANT. S. Where France?
> DRO. S. In her forehead; armed and reverted, making war against her heir.

These lines, almost certainly, refer to the civil strife that broke out in France in 1574,[1] when the newly crowned king, Henry III, made war against his brother Alençon; and I would ask the reader to note, that the use of the historic present, in this dialogue, is of great importance, in dating the first inception if not actually the first draft of the play; for although we may, very easily, suppose the insertion into the text, during revision, of

[1] Professor Sir Israel Gollancz holds that the reference is to the civil war between Henry III and Henry of Navarre, which lasted from August, 1589, to July, 1593; but I doubt whether Navarre could then be described as "her heir," i.e. heir to the kingdom.

such topical allusions as may help to bring the play up-to-date, I know no instance of—nor do I see any reason for—the insertion, with a precisely opposite purpose, of old news, as though it were new. I am prepared, then, to go even further than Professor Smart, who reads this allusion as pointing to a date *before* 1589 for "The Comedy of Errors,"[1] and suggest boldly that this play may have been first conceived, if not actually drafted, in 1574, when Oxford was in his 25th year.

Capt. Holland continues:[2] "It may be pointed out that, in the play, 'Syracuse and Ephesus' are the two countries which hold unfriendly relations with each other, and the embargo and refusals are very similar to those at the time taking place between Spain and England."

If Capt. Holland be right, in hinting that Antipholus of Ephesus means Antipholus of England—and I think he is—then there may be a double meaning in the following passage, from IV, 1—

> ANT. E. While I go to the goldsmith's house, go thou
> And buy a rope's end: that I will bestow
> Among my wife and her confederates,
> For locking me out of my doors by day.
> But soft! I see the goldsmith. Get thee gone;
> Buy thou a rope, and bring it home to me.
> DRO. E. I buy a thousand pound a year: I buy a rope.

We have already seen that Oxford, from 1589 onwards, was paid £1,000 a year, out of the secret service fund, as reward, it would seem, for writing the very plays with which we are concerned. Now this "Comedy of Errors" is generally dated, in finally revised form, *circa* 1590; i.e. about the very time when this large annuity was first paid; and if, as seems probable, a part of the understanding was that the Earl, the while, must be "locked out of doors"; or, in other words, to remain

[1] "Shakespeare, "Truth and Tradition," p. 207.
[2] "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," p. 27.

in retirement from the court, we may have here a possible clue to the meaning of Dromio's somewhat cryptic remark. In that case, I can even read "a double sense" into Antipholus' expressed intention to "bestow the rope among my wife and her confederates."

## "A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM"

"A Midsummer Night's Dream" is not one of those plays that contain many Oxfordian allusions, whether obvious, or cunningly concealed; but a general consideration of the comedy, as a whole, and of the many political allusions hidden within it, shows that this most exquisite of the world's dramatic fantasies fits in, quite naturally, with the theory of Oxford's authorship, and with the scheme and purport of its fellow Shakesperean plays. As I endeavoured to shew, in an earlier book,[1] the original idea of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" is, probably, adapted from "Titus Andronicus"; the wood near Rome being transmuted into a wood near Athens; the two married couples, of the tragedy, into the two unmarried couples, of the comedy; the queen of the Goths, into the queen of the Amazons, and of the Fairies; and a sordid, and terrible, intrigue into a thing of favour and prettiness: but there can be no doubt whatever that Shakespeare worked into "The Dream" many lines, and images, adapted from "Venus and Adonis" and much material from the later scenes of "Love's Labour's Lost." Further, the close of II, 2, of "The Comedy of Errors," seems, unquestionably, to have provided more ideas, that were made use of in "The Dream," as witness the following lines:—

ANT. S. What, was I married to her in my dream?
Or sleep I now, and think I hear all this?
What error drives our eyes and ears amiss?
DRO. S. This is the fairy land. O spite of spites!
We talk with goblins, owls, and sprites.

I am transformed, master, am not I?
. . . . . both in my mind and in my shape.
LUCI. 'tis to an ass.
DRO. S. 'Tis true; she rides me, and I long for grass.
'Tis so, I am an ass.
ADR. While man and master laughs my woes to scorn.

[1] "Shakespeare, Jonson and Wilkins as Borrowers," pp. 1-18.

That all this foreshadows "The Dream," will, I think, be generally admitted; but I have little doubt that Shakespeare took the original idea, of the ass's head, from Lyly's "Midas," an anti-Catholic play published in 1592, wherein Midas (Philip II of Spain) for having chosen Catholicism (Pan), instead of Protestantism (Apollo), has set upon his head ass's ears, that may grow longer yet, should he dare to lift a hand against England (Lesbos).[1]

Certain authorities have, though unconsciously, helped to advocate the Oxford cause by supposing that "The Dream" was first performed on the occasion of the marriage of Oxford's daughter, Elizabeth, to William Stanley, Earl of Derby; but, as Miss Edith Rickert, following Professor Lefranc,[2] has argued, the play may have been acted for the fête at Elvetham, given, in 1591, by Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, as propaganda for the succession, to the English throne, of his son, the daughter of Lady Katharine Gray, by the will of Henry VIII. That boy, Lord Beauchamp, at the queen's instigation, was declared illegitimate, by an ecclesiastical commission, sitting in 1562. The mother, sent to prison, died of ill-treatment, and of a broken heart; and in the same year, January 18, 1562, about four months after the birth of this Suffolk heir, the play "Gorboduc," by Thomas Sackville, and Thomas Norton, Hertford's former tutor—representing the ruin of England, for lack of a single heir, and ending with a Scottish invasion of England, with the English crown as its object—was played, before the queen, by the Gentlemen of the Inner Temple, as political propaganda, no doubt, in the cause of Lady Katharine and her son. Now, as I shall shew,

[1] I would remind readers that Lyly was in Oxford's employ from about 1583 to 1589, or even later, and that the bulk of his dramatic work seems to have been done while he was managing the Earl's company of players.

[2] Political propaganda and satire in "A Midsummer Night's Dream" ("Modern Philology," Vol. XXI, August to November, 1923).

when considering "Twelfth Night," Thomas Sackville was, almost certainly, the historic original of Sir Toby Belch; and, of course, was well known to Oxford; while "Twelfth Night," as I suggested in an earlier book,[1] may well have been—in some original form, that has not come down to us—a propaganda play for the Anjou or Alençon marriage, first mooted in 1572. Both plays, therefore, thus considered, are succession plays, wherein the author of the second ("Twelfth Night") brings in, as one of his characters (Sir Toby Belch), a not unkindly burlesque of the author of the first.

In 1565–66, a determined effort had been made to induce the queen to appoint a successor; the chairman of the committee that presented the petition to the queen being none other than Thomas Norton himself. In 1570 Queen Elizabeth was excommunicated, and "Gorboduc" reprinted: in 1571—his wife, Lady Katharine having died in 1568—Hertford was released from prison, and, in 1580, inherited an enormously rich patrimony. The death of Alençon, in 1581, ended the prospect of a French marriage, of which Oxford had been a keen supporter; and in 1591 comes the fête at Elvetham, already referred to, concerning which Col. Ward sends me the following very plausible suggestions, that I venture to accept.

> I do not think that "A Midsummer Night's Dream" was acted at Elvetham in 1591. I think it was acted at the Stanley-Vere marriage in 1594, and that it *describes* the events at Elvetham in 1591, when William Stanley (afterwards Earl Derby) and Elizabeth de Vere, his future wife, first fell in love.

Be that as it may, "A Midsummer Night's Dream" appears to be a second, and up-to-date, propagandist play, for the Suffolk succession, with Oberon probably standing for Henry VIII, Titania for Queen Elizabeth,[2]

[1] "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," cap. II.

[2] *Cf.* Dekker's "The Whore of Babylon," wherein "Titania, Queen of the Fairies," is, by Dekker's own admission, "our late Queen Elizabeth."

and Lady Katharine Gray for the "votaress of our order" (i.e. of Diana), who dies at the birth of the black illegitimate boy. Oberon's vision of the promontory, and of the "fair vestal throned by the west," fits, exactly, a surviving contemporary picture of the Elvetham pageant, and is motivated by the Earl of Hertford's situation; the votaress passage finding an exact parallel in the circumstances, and fate, of his first wife, Lady Katharine Gray. Hertford, moreover, we know to have been a man of literary instincts; since both he and his wife took an active interest in the drama; he, and also his son, Lord Beauchamp, both being patrons of dramatic companies. One of his gentlemen, Sir George Carey—a man, by the way, very well informed, concerning Scotland, and the court of King James—had helped to hold the canopy over the queen's chair-of-state, during the Elvetham pageant; and Carey's father, Lord Hunsdon, had been on active service against the northern rebels, with Oxford, in 1570. With Oxford, Sussex, Burleigh, and others, he was one of that section of the court party that had favoured the Alençon marriage, when the question came up again, with the arrival of Simier, at London, in the spring of 1579.

"The Dream," therefore, comes, naturally, as a sequel to "Gorboduc," in advocating the Suffolk succession; and follows it again, by attacking, also, the Scottish succession; since Miss Rickert seems quite to make good her case, in shewing that Bottom, the weaver, is a caricature of King James of Scotland; the "lion-among-the-ladies" motive recalling the pageant at Stirling; and the jokes about Bottom's paucity of beard; his timidity over drawing a sword; his solemn pomposity; his ass's head; his taste for oats; and his addiction to French and Italian, with other points of resemblance also, all indicating King James as the weaver's historic prototype. That Oxford, considered as Shakespeare, was much interested in the Scotch court, is certain. We have already noticed his interest in the

Medicis, of whom Mary Queen of Scots, by marriage, was one. Oxford had sat as one of the Commissioners, at her trial in 1586; and both "Hamlet" and "Macbeth" are based, in part, upon the Darnley murder of 1567.[1] The secret meaning of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," however, must have been well kept from James of Scotland; since, upon his accession to the English crown, he lent his royal name to the Globe company, and continued Oxford's pension of £1,000 a year, first granted by Elizabeth in 1586.

[1] See post pp. 330–334 and pp. 337, 338.

## "THE TAMING OF THE SHREW"

This farce, carefully examined, raises several points of interest, upon an assumption of Oxford's authorship; the most alluring being those in the Induction, which, though too involved, I think, for full comprehension, are, it seems, at bottom, an attack upon the actor of Stratford-on-Avon, under a name that is suspiciously reminiscent of Burleigh's.

Captain Holland, in his "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," [1] points out that the name Cecil was often spelt Cysell, whereof C. Sly makes a fairly good anagram. Burleigh, moreover, could not trace his ancestry further back than a grandfather of Henry VII's time; a fact that lends point to

> . . . the Slys are no rogues; look in the chronicles; we came in with Richard Conqueror (i.e. Richard III)—

especially if that passage was actually written by a belted earl, whose ancestors "came in," indeed, with William the Conqueror, as was true, unquestionably, of the de Veres.[2] Another less direct connection with Burleigh will become visible a little further on.

Continuing, the Lord's words :—

> Tomorrow I intend to hunt again—

followed by this, concerning the sleeping tinker :—

> O monstrous beast, how like a swine he lies—

remind us, at once, and, perhaps, intentionally, of "Venus and Adonis" (587)—

> Tomorrow he intends to hunt the boar—

and suggest the allusions to Oxford concealed within that poem, which I pointed out in Chapter IV. Again, all the business of the flattering dream :—

[1] pp. 32, 33.

[2] The first Earl of Oxford (to be) crossed the Channel with William the Norman, and fought at Hastings.

Persuade that he hath been a lunatic;
And when he says he is, say that he dreams,
For he is nothing but a mighty lord—

with its Hamlet motive of lunacy, and its echo of the sonnets—

In sleep a king, in waking no such matter—

is altogether Oxfordian; an impression strengthened by the immediate entry of the players, greeted by the lord—"Now, fellows, you are welcome"—in words identical almost with those of Hamlet (II, 2):—

You are welcome, masters, welcome all.

The Lord's bearing towards them, moreover, has exactly the same note of intimacy, without familiarity, that is so pleasingly evident in the relations between the Prince of Denmark and his players; repeating, in comedy vein, the play-within-the-play motive of the tragedy.

The Induction, therefore, I hold to be symbolical, with the Lord standing for Oxford, and Sly representing, not, as his name suggests, Burleigh—though in this connection with the players we may still have Burleigh in mind—but with the Stratford actor, who, in the second scene, is to be identified with the Arden locality,[1] just as he is in a corresponding scene of "As You Like It." Oxford, following the symbolic fashion of his time, was fond of alluding to his plays as to a wife. He does so, as we shall see, humorously in "As You Like It," and with lofty tragical exaltation in "Romeo and Juliet"; and here, likewise, his page, Bartholomew, "dress'd in all suits like a lady," and pretending to be the tinker's wife, stands, once more, as I hold, for the plays, to the authorship of, or marriage with which, claim is being made by the man of Stratford. As a gibe at that claim I interpret the lines:—

[1] Barton-on-the-Heath, referred to, is a small village on the borders of Warwickshire and Oxfordshire. Wincot is the name of a hamlet distant 4 miles from Stratford on road to Cheltenham; or the reference may be to Wilmecote, 3 miles north of Stratford.

I long to hear him call the drunkard husband,
And how my men will stay themselves from laughter
When they do homage to this simple peasant—[1]

and suspect them to be an allusion to homage actually done to the actor, by certain contemporaries, not in the secret of the real authorship, as Greene, Chapman, Harvey, and Jonson, undoubtedly were.

The Hamlet motive is strangely persistent throughout this Induction; for Sly's words, "I have no more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs," recall, immediately, the lines spoken in Chapman's "Revenge of Bussy" (I, 1), by Monsieur, to Clermont, who is Chapman's version of Hamlet.

The most renowned soldier
Epaminondas, as good authors say,
Had no more suits than backs—

all this, moreover, set among themes, and lines, patently imitated by Chapman from Hamlet, and containing comment after comment, usually hostile, upon the men and matter of that tragedy.[2] Equally in the Hamlet mood are the Lord's lines, that follow:—

O, that a mighty man, of such descent,
Of such possessions, and such high esteem,
Should be infused with so foul a spirit.

Then follow the well-known references, by Christopher, to himself, as "Old Sly's son of Burton Heath . . . now by present profession a tinker. Ask Marion Hackett, the fat ale-wife of Wincot."

I sometimes wonder whether that "tinker," rightly interpreted, does not mean a tinker of another author's plays; but, whatever be the truth of the matter, the Lord's lines, that follow:—

Hence comes it that your kindred shuns your house,
As beaten hence by your strange lunacy.

[1] These pages should be read in conjunction with my remarks on "Merry Wives," IV, 1; "As You Like It," V, 1; "Romeo and Juliet," V, 3.

[2] See my "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 212, 213.

O noble lord, bethink thee of thy birth,
Call home thy ancient thoughts from banishment,
And banish hence these abject lowly dreams.

continue the typical lunacy and banishment motives of "Hamlet," "Romeo and Juliet," and other plays. The line referring to the picture :—

Adonis painted by a running brook—

may, possibly, be another pun upon the author of "Venus," and his name de Vere; and I feel certain that this passage :—

LORD. Thou art a lord and nothing but a lord;
Thou hast a lady far more beautiful
Than any woman in this waning age.
SERV. . . . She was the fairest creature in the world;
And yet she is inferior to none—

is yet another reference to the plays, as symbolized by a woman; while the allusion to Sly's fifteen years of dream, twice repeated, and to his being "beaten out of door," and railed on by his hostess, is exactly the sort of moan that Oxford repeatedly makes, over his banishment from court; a surmise strengthened by the reference to "Joan," which recalls, immediately, Oxford's poem, "Fortune and Love."—

So to the wood went I,
With love to live and lie

My saint I keep to me,
And Joan herself is she,
Joan fair as true—

wherein the name of Joan is linked up with the same banishment motive. Another line that comes to mind, in this connection, is that spoken by Biron (Shakespeare) during the "dark lady" speech in "Love's Labour's Lost" (III, 1) :—

Some men must love my lady, and some Joan.

In the light of what has gone before, and is yet to follow in these pages, is not some significance discernible also

in the closing question, and answer, concerning the pleasant comedy that is toward?

> SLY. What, household stuff?
> PAGE. It is a kind of history.

For, as I hope to make sufficiently clear, before long, very many of the Shakesperean plays are, in a measure, "household stuff"; and all of them, in two senses of the word, are "a kind of *history*."

Turning now to the comedy proper, the first interesting point to be noticed, in connection with our theory of authorship, is Shakespeare's apparent indebtedness to sonnets 139, 140, 147, and 148 [1] in the new rhyme-linked order, for material which he uses in his comedy—material probably based upon some quarrel that Oxford had with his wife, at a time when his relations with that "dark lady" [2] seem to have become tensely strained; and I feel confident, also, that the very immature comedy, "Two Gentlemen of Verona," which provided him with so many hints for better plays, gave him also, in Valentine's speech (III, 1), further matter and hints for "The Shrew."

> A woman sometime scorns what best contents her:
> Send her another; never give her o'er;
> For scorn at first makes after-love the more.
> If she do frown, 'tis not in hate of you,
> But rather to beget more love in you:
> If she do chide, 'tis not to have you gone;
> For why the fools are mad, if left alone.
> Take no repulse, whatever she doth say;
> For *get you gone*, she doth not mean *away*.
> Flatter and praise, commend, extol their graces.
> Though ne'er so black, say they have angels' faces.
> That man that hath a tongue, I say is no man,
> If with his tongue he cannot win a woman.

Almost every line, in this passage, can be directly paralleled, in the dialogue of Petruchio, with, or con-

[1] Nos. 132, 127, 153, and 130 in the quarto sequence.
[2] Note the link here with Biron's "dark lady" speech in "Love's Labour's Lost," III, 1.

cerning, Katherina, to which I refer all readers who care to look up that robust adventurer's speeches.

Another interesting point, first called attention to, I think, by Mr. Looney,[1] is, that Oxford, who was at Padua in 1576, wrote to Burleigh,[2] from Italy, concerning 500 crowns, that he had borrowed from one Baptista Negrone; and that, in "The Taming of the Shrew," there is much concern with crowns, as also with a certain Baptista, a rich gentleman of Padua, who is father of Katharina, just as Burleigh was father of Oxford's first wife. Concerning the date of the play, we have another instance of the frequent throwback of Shakespeare's mind to the 'seventies, in Petruchio's lines, when, fantastically arrayed, for the wedding ceremony, he addresses the wondering guests :—

> Gentles, methinks you frown;
> And wherefore gaze this goodly company,
> As if they saw some wondrous monument,
> Some comet, or unusual prodigy?—

the references here being, as Capt. Holland has pointed out,[3] to the great comet, that was visible in England from October, 1577, until January, 1578; and, probably, to the new tower on London Bridge, begun in August, 1577.

[1] "Shakespeare Identified," pp. 271, 272.

[2] This connects up again with Sly, as being named perhaps, from the Cecils.

[3] "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," p. 31.

## "THE MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR"

Few of the Shakesperean plays are more interesting, from an Oxfordian view-point, than is "The Merry Wives," which can be described, with very little exaggeration, as a dramatization of the rivalry between Oxford and Philip Sidney, for the hand of Anne Cecil; with the ultimate victory going to Oxford-Fenton; and ignominious defeat to Sidney-Slender,[1] whom Shakespeare, at very nearly the same time, is again to caricature, in part, as Aguecheek in "Twelfth Night."

That Shakespeare, whoever he was, knew Windsor intimately, the topographical experts are, I believe, generally agreed; Mr. W. H. Dixon in his book, "Royal Windsor,"[2] having shewn us how "street and market-place, inn-yard and water-side, hedgerow and park-fence became to him as objects in his native town"; though we have no evidence, so far as I am aware, that the man of Stratford ever familiarized himself closely with Windsor. The late Professor J. S. Smart writes, nevertheless:—"All is revealed in "The Merry Wives of Windsor," which might, with equal propriety, have been called "The Merry Wives of Stratford." . . . Such are the figures which pass and repass in Stratford, here called Windsor."[3] This statement would be amazing, were one capable, any longer, of being amazed by what the academic school write concerning the Stratford actor; for it is positively certain that—wholly apart from his identity—the Windsor written of by Shakespeare, in this play, is the Thames-side town still known by that name; and no other: and how, with any sort of propriety, it might have been called Stratford-on-Avon passes my comprehension.

Oxford, however, must have known Windsor in-

[1] Philip Sidney is almost an anagram for Slender. The names equal "Phip Slendry."

[2] III, 301-303, quoted J. T. Looney's "Poems of Edward de Vere," Introduction, p. xx.

[3] "Shakespeare Truth and Tradition."

timately, almost from boyhood days, when, as Royal Ward, and Lord Great Chamberlain, the young Earl was in attendance on the queen at court. He may be said, moreover, to have had an almost hereditary connection with Windsor, both literary and topographical, since his own uncle, the poet, Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey—into whose direct line of succession, as courtier-poet, Oxford, naturally, comes—had gone to Windsor, a boy of twelve, in 1529, and there had passed nearly three years, as companion to Henry VIII's illegitimate son, Henry, Duke of Richmond—days lovingly remembered by Surrey, and concerning which he wrote, before his execution, the pathetic lines :—

> So crewell prison ! How could betyde, alas !
> As prowde Wyndsour, where I, in lust and joye,
> With a kinges son my childishe years did passe.

Facts so poignant lingered, naturally, in Oxford's mind ; with the result that, in the opening scene of the play, we find Slender saying :—

> I had rather than forty shillings I had my book of Songs and Sonnets here—

that being the exact title of Surrey's book, published in 1557. Now, as Mr. Looney makes quite clear, in an able article, " The Earl of Oxford as Shakespeare : New Evidence," [1] a careful reading of " The Merry Wives " reveals the closest analogies between the character, and circumstances, of Fenton and Oxford ; and between those of Slender and Sidney, in the negotiations for the marriage, with Sidney, of Anne Cecil, who is the Anne Page of the play, and who, like the Anne Cecil of history, is averse from the match.

The Sidney of history was largely dependent upon his uncle, Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, while the chief agent for Slender is another Robert, surnamed Shallow. Slender, like Sidney, is lukewarm, but anxious to please the negotiators, and, also like Sidney,

[1] See " The Golden Hind," October, 1922.

he is "well landed." Further, it was arranged that, at the time of his marriage, Sidney should have rather more than the "three hundred pounds a year," commented upon, so bitterly, by Anne Page, in Act III; with prospect of substantial improvement after his mother's death. Sidney, moreover, had Welsh associations, the family being closely connected with Ludlow; and it is significant, therefore, that Hugh Evans, who raises the question of the marriage, is a Welsh parson, and that the financial details mentioned in the play, such as the "seven hundred pounds," left by "her grandsire on his death bed," and the "better penny," which it is suggested that her father might bestow (I, 1), all fit in, very closely, with the actual content of the documents among the Hatfield papers. As for Fenton, he is pure Oxford, as witness the talk, concerning him, between Host and Page, in III, 2.

> HOST. What say you to young Master Fenton? he capers, he dances, he has eyes of youth, he writes verses, he speaks holiday, he smells April and May; he will carry't; he will carry't; 'tis in his buttons; he will carry't.
>
> PAGE. Not by my consent, I promise you. The gentleman is of no having. He kept company with the wild prince and Poins; he is of too high a region; he knows too much.

Here every detail fits Oxford, including even the phrase, "He smells April and May"; since the Seventeenth Earl was born on April 12, and was destined to have a perfume specially named after him.[1] Thus it continues, on Fenton's shewing, to Anne Page, in III, 4—

> FENT. He doth object I am too great of birth;
> And that, my state being gall'd with my expense,
> I seek to heal it only by his wealth.
> Besides these, other bars he lays before me,—
> My riots past, my wild societies.

[1] See ante pp. 224, 225.

Further, these pointed references to "wild societies," and to "company with the wild prince and Poins," link this play up, naturally, with "Henry IV," and have again, therein, close parallel with history; since we read, in a state paper of 1573, that William Fawnt and John Wotton complain to Burghley that they have been "assaulted between Gravesend and Rochester by three of the Earl of Oxford's men who escaped towards London"—an incident which seems to reappear, exactly, in part one of "Henry IV."

We now come to one of these very debateable, but intensely interesting, and intriguing, motives, which we have found already in several plays, that suggest intentional, and deliberate, though, of course, concealed word-play, by Oxford, upon his own name, or names; and which, by their cumulative effect, when considered as a whole, are of immense, and profound, significance, in determining this question of authorship.

In Act II, Scene 2, there enters to Falstaff one Ford, disguised as Master Brook, with the object of entrapping Falstaff, in an amorous intrigue with Mrs. Ford. The scene opens as follows:—

*Enter Bardolph to Falstaff.*

BARD. Sir John, there's one Master Brook below would fain speak with you, and be acquainted with you; and hath sent you worship a morning's draught of sack.

FALS. Brook is his name?

BARD. Ay, Sir.

FALS. Call him in. (*Exit Bardolph.*) Such Brooks are welcome to me, that o'erflow such liquor.

Now we have here a series of possible double meanings; for not only is the name Ford identical with Oxford, shorn of the "Ox"; but also Ford, in disguise, assumes the name of "Brook," which, transformed into "spring," can be Latinized, into Oxford's other name, Vere, often spelt Ver. Further, a ford, such as can be crossed by an ox, may also be a Brook, or spring; and

we know that, when aiming at Oxford-Shakespeare, in "A Groatsworth of Wit," Greene used an exactly similar play upon words.[1] Concerning this name, "Brook," moreover, Capt. Holland has pointed out[2] that, Bulbeck being one of Oxford's names, "Ford" is his name with the "Ox" removed, while "Beck" is his name with the "Bull" removed; and beck is another name for a brook! I suspect, moreover, that Falstaff's line:—

> Such Brooks are welcome to me that o'erflow such liquor—

is a veiled eulogy of the plays, and of their concealed author; more especially when we remember, as Mr. Looney does,[3] that, before the close of the interview, this same Ford utters a couplet:—

> Love like a shadow flies when substance love pursues;
> Pursuing that that flies, and flying what pursues—

which is very close to another, from Munday's play, "Two Italian Gentlemen"—

> Lo, here the common fault of love to follow her that flies,
> And fly from her that makes pursuit with loud lamenting cries.

Munday, let me add, like Lyly, having been in Oxford's employ, and having written certain passages that have suggested Shakespeare to critics who would scorn the idea of any connection between Shakespeare and Oxford. Nor, if my surmise is right, does the play upon Oxfordian words end here; for, if the reader will turn to V, 5, in which the fat knight is again made a fool of, he will find these words:—

> FAL. I do begin to perceive that I am made an ass.
> FORD. Ay, and an ox too: both the proofs are extant—

the second line of which brings the words "Ford," "Ox," and "proofs" into a conjunction that, in light

[1] See ante pp. 120, 121.
[2] "Shakespeare Through Oxford's Spectacles," p. 88.
[3] "Poems of Edward de Vere," pp. xxix-xxx.

of what has gone before, is, to say the least of it, remarkable. Lastly, as a link connecting these passages with another of Oxford's lyrically minded protégés, namely Lyly, it remains to be noted that the song, during which Falstaff is pinched, is first cousin to the song from Lyly's "Endymion":—

Pinch him, pinch him, black and blue—

quoted in an earlier chapter of this book, and probably written by Oxford.[1]

But before leaving this interesting play, which closes, as all the world knows, upon the marriage of Fenton with Anne Page, as did Sidney's courtship, with that of Anne Cecil to Oxford, I would call close, and particular, attention to that curious, and, in my judgment, deeply meaningful first scene, of Act IV, in which Master William Page is catechized by Sir Hugh Evans—a scene which, naturally, links itself with the similar catechizing of another William, in another comedy, written almost at the same time as "Merry Wives," namely "As You Like It"—the two scenes further resembling one another in this respect also; that neither reveals any apparent connection with the theme or argument of the play. Why, then, were they inserted? The reason seems to me perfectly clear. There existed, in the Elizabethan London of that day, two Williams, both of whom were the subject of contemporary debate and discussion. One of these was "William Shakespeare," otherwise Edward de Vere, Seventeenth Earl of Oxford, and secret author of the sonnets, of "Venus and Adonis," and of certain very popular plays; the other "William Shaxper," actor, of the Globe Theatre, a younger man than the former, by some fourteen years, who, according to some people—there being, evidently, doubt about the matter—was author of those plays, as well as actor in them—a suggestion which, it would seem from our sequel, the actor was at no pains to deny.

[1] See ante p. 60–62

Now this scene in "Merry Wives," as I read it, is a little joke, aimed by the first-named William, the actual playwright, at the second named William, the actor; his profession being hinted at, perhaps, when Mrs. Page remarks, of her son, before the entry of Evans: "'Tis a *playing* day, I see."

The younger William, be it observed, is not, in his father's eyes, at any rate, much of a bookman. In fact, as reported by the mother, the boy "profits nothing in the world at his book." He is shy, moreover, in the presence of the parson-knight—"William, hold your head up, come"—he yet answers with sound memory, though rather in the manner of a task learned by heart—thus again recalling the actor—certain questions concerning "Nominativo," and the borrowing and lending of "articles," including, possibly, of plays. Now all this debate upon learning, mingled with "Nominativo" (name and naming), "Genetivo" (generation, or producing things), "Accusativo" (accusation, J'accuse) etc., followed by "Vocativo" (O William!) and the "gentive case plural," suggesting questions of double generation or authorship, seem to me to mean, either nothing at all—a solution which I cannot, for an instant, accept—or to be deliberate word-play, by Oxford, concerning his relations with the other, and humbler, William, who, by the way, as an actor should, possesses "a good sprag memory," and is advised, at the close of the interview, to "go your ways and *play*," which is sound advice, to a player.[1] Whereupon we will pass on, to "As You Like It," and consider, though out of its place, an almost exactly parallel, and even more illuminating, passage, of the same kind, in the delightful

[1] Mr. Bertram Theobald, upon p. 37 of his "Shakespeare's Sonnets Unmasked," makes interesting comment on Mrs. Quickly's remark, in this scene: "Hang-hog is latten for Bacon, I warrant you"; pointing out that the word "latten" (for Latin), in the simplest cipher, A=1, B=2, etc., =68=F. Bacon, Kt., in the same cipher. "So that by substituting this signature for the word "latten," the line actually reads, "Hang-hog is Fr. Bacon, Kt."

comedy of Arden, that must have been written almost contemporaneously with "Merry Wives"; though I would first note that the only quarto edition of "Merry Wives" is a pirated one of 1602 (reprinted in 1619) less than half the length of the First Folio version of 1623, and excluding the "William" scene. Again, in lieu of the intimacy of the theme, what else was to be expected?

## CHAPTER IX

### OXFORD IN THE SHAKESPEREAN COMEDIES —*Continued*

"As You Like It"—"Twelfth Night"—"Much Ado About Nothing"—"All's Well That Ends Well"—"Measure for Measure."

### "AS YOU LIKE IT"

CONTINUING the theme upon which the last chapter closed, we will begin with the first scene of the fifth act, the setting of which is the Forest of the Ardennes, in the north-east of France. It will be noticed that this scene, like the parallel one from "Merry Wives," analyzed in the last chapter, is wholly outside the main action of the play, which would be unaffected by its elimination. The characters, appearing in that portion of it with which I am concerned, are three—Touchstone, Audrey, and William—each of whom I had long believed to have, in Shakespeare's mind, some direct, though secret, connection with the plays. Jaques, also, I felt certain, stood for Oxford himself; and, on going to the original romance, Lodge's "Rosalynd," from which Shakespeare worked, I found, as I expected to find, that none of these characters were taken from Lodge; but were all of Shakespeare's own creation, and were put into his comedy for a very definite purpose, which it now becomes my business to make clear.

Jaques, then, in "As You Like It," stands for Oxford himself, Touchstone for Oxford, as the author of the plays;[1] but, since the former does not come into this

[1] Miss Winstanley, in her "Othello the Tragedy of Italy," p. 47.

scene, we will leave the deciphering of him, for the present and concern ourselves only with the fool, Audrey, and William.

Touchstone, certainly, is spoken of by Rosalind, in I, 3, as a "clownish fool out of your father's court"; but he speaks always courtierly, rather than clownishly; and Jaques speaks of him, to his face, as the "motley-minded gentleman that I have so often met in the forest: he hath been a courtier, he swears." To which Touchstone answers:

> If any man doubt that, let him put me to my purgation. I have trod a measure; I have flattered a lady; I have been politic with my friend, smooth with mine enemy; I have undone three tailors; I have had four quarrels, and like to have fought one—

going on to explain, that he took up that quarrel on "the seventh cause," namely "the lie direct." All this needs no twisting, to fit to Oxford the dancer, and the quarreller,[1] to whom also applies, equally well,—*vide* Hamlet, for example—the Duke's remark, closing the scene:—

> He uses his folly like a stalking horse, and under the presentation of that he shoots his wit.

We may include in the term wit all these secret allusions, upon the track of which we are getting; and to the unravelling of which I beg the reader's most sympathetic comprehension; for, as Touchstone himself phrases it (III, 3):—

points out that Spenser also used double personalities, writing of Elizabeth, the Queen, as "Gloriana," Elizabeth, the woman, as Belphoebe. *Cf.* Phœbe in "As You Like It," and her analogy with Olivia-Elizabeth in "Twelfth Night."

[1] The allusion is probably to Oxford's quarrel with Sidney in the tennis court in 1579. See Ward's "Oxford," pp. 165-174. For Bourne in his "Memoirs of Sidney," writes, p. 180, "'A puppy,' repeated Oxford. 'That,' said Sidney, 'is a lie,'" i.e. the "lie direct," referred to by Shakespeare.

> When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child, understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room.

Bringing then, to our interpretation, what we may of "the forward child, understanding," I suggest that the following lines, from the same scene :—

> Sir Oliver. Truly, she must be given, or the marriage is not lawful.
>
> Jaques. Proceed, proceed. I'll give her—

means, quite simply, that there must be legitimate marriage between the plays, and their author; i.e. between Audrey and Touchstone;[1] whereupon the second Oxford, Jaques, takes the office upon himself :— "I'll give her": and forthwith does so;[2] he, if my interpretation is correct, being the only man possessing any such right.

Now let us pass on to the crucial scene, in the forest (V, 1), the opening of which runs thus :—

> Touch. A most wicked Sir Oliver, Audrey, a most vile Martext. But, Audrey, there is a youth here in the forest lays claim to you.
>
> Audre. Ay, I know who 'tis, he hath no interest in me in the world: here comes the man you mean.
>
> Touch. It is meat and drink to me to see a clown: by my troth, we that have good wits have much to answer for; we shall be flouting; we cannot hold.

This passage I interpret as an assertion, by Touchstone-Oxford, that a youth, "here in the forest," lays claim to the authorship of the plays; to which Audrey, speaking

[1] Many spectators of "Twelfth Night" have remarked upon the unnaturalness of the marriage between Touchstone and Audrey, which, however, becomes at once explicable when it is realized that the union is symbolic. Audrey's "sluttishness," I take it, is by way of disguise and in allusion to comic scenes.

[2] I suspect that the name, Sir Oliver Martext, covers some allusion to the plays, aiming, perhaps, at one of those gentlemen who were responsible for the publication of certain pirated and mangled versions.

for the plays, answers: "He hath no (legitimate) interest in me in the world." William is seen approaching; and Touchstone prepares to exercise his wits upon "a clown."

*Enter William.*

WILL. Good even, Audrey.
AUDR. God ye good even, William.
WILL. And good even to you, sir.
TOUCH. Good even, gentle friend. Cover thy head, cover thy head; nay, prithee, be covered. How old are you, friend?
WILL. Five and twenty, sir.
TOUCH. A ripe age. Is thy name William?
WILL. William, sir.
TOUCH. A fair name. Wast born i' the forest here?
WILL. Ay, sir, I thank God.
TOUCH. Thank God; a good answer.

Will, evidently, is a little shy, in the presence of Touchstone; just as the other William, of "Merry Wives," was before Evans. Touchstone, however, puts him graciously at his ease; and then, upon asking his age, gets the answer, "Five and twenty, sir." Now William, the Stratford actor, born in 1564, would be twenty-five years old, in the year 1589; and "Rosaynd," from which Shakespeare drew his play, first printed in 1590, was, almost certainly, in manuscript by 1589. That year, therefore, seems to be the key-date for this scene; the meaning behind Touchstone's comment, "a ripe age," being, as I read it, "Are you old enough, at twenty-five, to be writing these plays?"

Touchstone's two following questions elicit the answer, that the local's name is "William"—without surname—and that he was "born i' the forest," which the player of Stratford certainly was; though the forest was the Warwickshire Arden, and not the French Ardennes, in which actually the play is laid. The scene continues:

TOUCH. Art rich?

WILL. Faith, sir, so so.

TOUCH. "So so" is good, very good, very excellent good; and yet it is not; it is but so so. Art thou wise?

WILL. Ay, sir, I have a pretty wit.

TOUCH. Why, thou sayest well. I do now remember a saying, "The fool doth think he is wise, but the wise man knows himself to be a fool." The heathen philosopher, when he had a desire to eat a grape, would open his lips when he put it into his mouth; meaning thereby that grapes were made to eat, and lips to open. You do love this maid?

WILL. I do, sir.

Touchstone's next question; "Art rich?" means, as I understand it, that William the actor, a shrewd business man, as we know—and destined to die wealthy, as wealth went then—is already doing pretty well for himself, as a shareholder in the Globe Theatre; but the question that follows: "Art thou wise?" I take to be a veiled challenge:—"Are you wise enough to have written these plays?"; while all the word-play about eating grapes, and lips that were made to open, means, I suppose, that sweet things—such, for example, as beautiful plays—were made to enjoy, and to be spoken truthfully about, by lips that open to receive their sweetness, as well as to praise it. Asked whether he loves this maid (the plays), William acknowledges that, like the rest of us—actors, and all—he does. The scene continues:—

TOUCH. Give me your hand. Art thou learned?

WILL. No, sir.

TOUCH. Then learn this of me: to have, is to have; for it is a figure in rhetoric that drink, being poured out of a cup into a glass, by filling the one doth empty the other; for all your writers do consent that ipse is he: now you are not ipse, for I am he.

WILL. Which he, sir?

TOUCH. He that must marry this woman. Therefore, you clown, abandon . . . the society . . . of this female,

or, clown, thou perishest; . . . I will kill thee a hundred and fifty ways. Therefore tremble, and depart.

AUDR. Do, good William.

WILL. God rest you merry, sir.

The reader, now provided with the clues, will follow the rest, easily enough. Touchstone challenges William again:—"Are you learned?—enough to have written these plays?"; and, being answered with a negative admission, the questioner proceeds to remind William that "drink"—grape-juice, or other—poured out of a non-transparent cup, into a transparent glass, necessarily, "by filling the one doth empty the other"; which translated into plain English, means that there cannot co-exist two authors of the plays; and since the knowing ones, such as contemporary writers, and men-of-letters—Harvey, Chapman, Jonson, and the rest—are all whispering that "ipse is he"—or that these works can only have been written by a courtier, or well-educated person, like themselves—it becomes evident that you, William, are not "ipse, for I am he." When William asks, "Which he?" Touchstone replies: "I am the he that must marry (have my name legitimately allied with) this woman, the plays. I must, therefore, ask you to quit her society; and to pretend, no longer, to be dramatist, as well as actor"—all which, be it observed, including the threat to kill William, "a hundred and fifty ways," is done jestingly, and without malice, as becomes evident from William's exit-line, "God rest you merry, sir." Nor should it be overlooked that the maiden, speaking for the plays, supports Touchstone, with her, "Do, good William." Oxford, in authentic history, may well have connived at the forest-bred William's claim; though he wrote the truth of the matter secretly into his comedy.

These interpretations of the two "William" scenes, from "Merry Wives" and "As You Like It," linked with the Induction to "The Shrew," may grieve some orthodox consciences; but, from my conclusions, I see,

intellectually, no possible escape. Both scenes, in common with the Induction also, are dragged into the plays, without reference to context; both deal with the same kind of William, in the same kind of way—a young, shy, and not very learned, individual catechized, concerning his intellectual, and other, attainments, by an older man, more lettered, and of higher social rank: in both instances William appears once only, towards the end of the play—no William appearing in any other plays at all—and, lastly, we have the very significant point, that "As You Like It"—a play, as we shall see, personal to Oxford, through and through—was not printed until the Folio of 1623, after a proposed earlier quarto, for a reason undivulged, but easily guessed at, had been "staied." I have explained that "The Merry Wives," also in its present form, is equally a First Folio play—the quarto of 1602 being obviously pirated, cut down to half, and shorn of the "William" scene. If, in the light of these facts, orthodox Shakespereans still challenge the validity of my interpretations, which fit together like well-made gloves upon a pair of shapely hands, I am fairly entitled to ask them, in their turn, for a more lucid interpretation of their own; such as, at every point, will square better with the known facts, and with intelligent surmises from the texts.

In my "Shakespeare, Wilkins and Jonson as Borrowers," [1] I shewed that the Silvius-Phœbe-Rosalind scenes, of "As You Like It," undoubtedly furnished Shakespeare with many ideas for the Orsino-Olivia-Viola scenes of "Twelfth Night"; and in my last book [2] I shewed that certain characters of "Twelfth Night" were based upon personages from the French court, belonging, or attached, to the Medici family. The scene of "As You Like It" being also set in France, I am inclined to agree with Miss Winstanley, that some of the comedy's characters may be based, in part, upon

[1] pp. 36-42.
[2] "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," cap. III.

French people; Orlando, possibly, aiming, to some extent, at Henry of Navarre, in the days when, France being at war with herself, the future king was driven to live, as best he might, "in the forest." I have, nevertheless, no doubt whatever that the main theme of the comedy is primarily personal to Oxford's own life; the banishment, from the court to the forest, symbolizing Oxford's own banishment or withdrawal from court, which took place about 1589; the exact year which, as we now know, from the "William" scene, provides the key-date for the play; and which seems, almost certainly, to have been due, in some degree, to the slanders that had stained his good name, as from the year 1576, and disgusted him with the intrigues of court life. Now the chief promulgator of those later slanders of the 'eighties was Oxford's own cousin, Charles Arundel[1]; and, as Mr. Looney has noted,[2] there are made against Orlando by his brother Oliver, at the commencement of "As You Like It," a series of charges of a very similar kind. Further, Oliver's accomplice, in this nefarious business, is named Charles; and, by a simple transposing of letters, almost exactly analogous to those which, in "Twelfth Night," gives us "Orsineu" and "Orscina" from Alençon-Orsino's title and name, "Monsieur" and "Francois," we get the following extremely interesting results:—

Charles-Orlando = Charles Arondol
Arundel = Urlande
Rosalind = Arondils—

from which striking similarities, and taking other corroborative facts, and inferences, into consideration, I can only conclude that Oxford, when he wrote the play, deliberately, by a simple anagram, or cipher,[3] wove

[1] Ward's "Oxford," pp. 67, 99, 128, 129, 213, 222, 385, etc. Oxford in 1581 preferred accusations of treasons against Howard and Arundel. Introduction, p. 208.

[2] "Shakespeare Identified," p. 219.

[3] Bacon, in "Advancement of Learning," wrote: "For ciphers, they are commonly in letters, but may be in words."

the name of his principal accuser, Charles Arundel, into the names of certain of his characters—a piece of very weighty evidence in the case for Oxford's authorship. If there be more than chance, in the likeness of the name Rosalind to Arundel's name, it looks as though her original may also have had some historic connection with Arundel or with his family. The fact that Orlando's name, and not Oliver's, gives us an anagram of the slanderer is curious; but I cannot regard the matter as a mere coincidence.

Thus considered, Oliver's speech, concerning Orlando, which closes I, 1, takes on a new significance, as being wholly applicable to Oxford.

> Now will I stir this gamester. I hope I shall see an end of him; for my soul, yet I know not why, hates nothing more than he. Yet he's gentle; never schooled, and yet learned; full of noble device; of all sorts enchantingly beloved; and indeed so much in the heart of the world, and especially of my own people, who best know him, that I am altogether misprised: but it shall not be so long; this wrestler shall clear all.

With the close of Act I, Celia has promised to win over Touchstone-Oxford; and to lure him "out of your father's court," to be "a comfort to our travel." That being arranged, the lady concludes, triumphantly,

> Now go we in content,
> To liberty and not to banishment—[1]

words which, as I read them, conceal a gibe at the bondage of Elizabeth's service, that we shall find repeated in "Romeo and Juliet," where also the word "banishment" is played with, though tragically, and not half humorously, as it is here, and also in "Two Gentlemen of Verona." "King Lear" also provides an almost exactly analogous example.

[1] A similar gibe at the court occurs in III, 2—

*Touchstone* (*Oxford*). Truly thou art damned, like an ill-roasted egg; all on one side.

*Corin.* For not being at court?

Considered from the Oxford view-point, however, the central character of the play is not Orlando, nor even Touchstone, but Jaques, who, unquestionably, in my judgment, stands for Oxford himself. From his first entry into the play, in II, 5, the "stanzo," which he adds, impromptu, to "Who Doth Ambition Shun?" has the typical Oxfordian note of mystery about it; and I think it probable that its real intention is to gibe, once more, at the Elizabethan courtier, who, lured by the glamour of the queen's name—"ducdame, ducdame, ducdame"—is willing to leave wealth and ease, to please, if he can, majesty's stubborn will.[1] This "ducdame," explains Jaques, in his speech,—which closes that scene,—is "a Greek invocation to call fools (? courtiers) into a circle (the court)—"I'll go sleep, if I can." Those last words, if I read them aright, hint at the Earl's disappearance from active life; and—omitting the brief scene, between Orlando and Adam in the forest—the next (II, 7), still referring to Jaques, opens upon the same idea, of concealed identity.

> DUKE S. I think he be transformed into a beast;
> For I can nowhere find him like a man.

As for the famous speech, that follows, with its "miserable world," its "railing on Lady Fortune," and the repeated references, half serious, half scornful, to "motley as the only wear", they are, in my judgment, no more than dramatized adaptations of such Shakesperean sonnets as 118/111—

> O for my sake do you with Fortune chide—

and (122/110):—

> Alas, 'tis true I have gone here and there,
> And made myself a motley to the view:

their half-concealed references to Shakespeare's work for the stage—those "public means which public

[1] Compare Romeo's attack on queen and court in the opening speech of "R. & J," II, 2," Arise, fair sun." See post p. 308.

manners breeds"—being echoed again in the play, not only in the obvious implication of Jaques' :—

> Invest me in my motley; give me leave
> To speak my mind, and I will through and through
> Cleanse the foul body of the infected world—

which I take to be an affirmation of the underlying moral purpose of the plays—but also in "the world's-a-stage" speech, which comes towards the close of the scene.

Moreover, the motive of these lines wherein Shakespeare, through the mouth of Jaques, dubs himself a mirthful-melancholy fool—just as he does in the sonnets, from which we have been quoting—is continued throughout the play; the next instance being the duologue between Orlando and Jaques, in III, 2—

> JAQ. By my troth, I was seeking for a fool when I found you.
> ORL. He is drowned in the brook; look but in, and you shall see him.
> JAQ. There I shall see mine own figure.
> ORL. Which I take to be either a fool or a cipher.

This is a most interesting passage; because the identification of Jaques with the fool—bringing the two characters together—is followed by another obvious reference to the hidden identity: "He is drowned in the Brook"; i.e. hidden in the identity of Oxford, whom we have already seen, in "Merry Wives," concealed beneath that name; Ver (a spring), and beck (from Bulbek), both being puns upon Oxford's name. Nor have I any doubt that the famous line, by the Duke, in II, 1—

> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks—

is, similarly, another reference to Oxford himself, and to the plays, or "books," which were emanating from the "running brooks," and were finding "tongues in trees." The reference to Jaques' own figure, as being either "a fool or a cipher"—linking itself up, very naturally, with Jaques' "invocation to call fools into a circle," in II, 5—continues the same kind of cipher

language, in which the identity of the playwright is divided between the round O, symbol of Oxford's invisibility, and the nothingness of a fool's folly.

The third scene of Act III brings us to the following very meaningful passage :—

*The Forest.*

*Enter Touchstone and Audrey. Jaques behind.*

TOUCH. Come apace, good Audrey. I will fetch up your goats, Audrey. And how, Audrey? am I the man yet? doth my simple features content you?

AUDR. Your features! Lord warrant us! what features?[1]

TOUCH. I am here with thee and thy goats, as the most capricious poet, honest Ovid, was among the Goths.

JAQU. (*aside*). O knowledge ill-inhabited, worse than Jove in a thatched house.

TOUCH. When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room. Truly, I would the gods had made thee poetical.

AUDR. I do not know what poetical is : is it honest in deed and word? is it a true thing?

TOUCH. No, truly; for the truest poetry is the most feigning; and lovers are given to poetry, and what they swear in poetry may be said as lovers they do feign.

AUDR. Do you wish then that the gods had made me poetical?

TOUCH. I do, truly; for thou swearest to me thou art honest :[2] now, if thou wert a poet, I might have some hope thou didst feign.

AUDR. Would you not have me honest?

TOUCH. No, truly, unless thou wert hard-favoured; for honesty coupled to beauty is to have honey a sauce to sugar.

Here Audrey, as we have seen, stands for the plays, more especially in their humorous or comedic appeal;

[1] *Cf.* the enigmatic mask-portrait of the First Folio; and Jonson's enigmatic verses "To the Reader," opposite thereto.

[2] i.e. chaste.

the passage quoted bearing, as I hold, beneath the surface, a second meaning throughout. Audrey's exclamation :—

> Your features! Lord warrant us! what features?

I read as a hint that the dramatist, concealed in the guise of Touchstone, has no features that can reveal his identity; while Touchstone's

> When a man's verses cannot be understood, nor a man's good wit seconded with the forward child understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room—

means, simply, that, unless the reader, or spectator, of the play has wit enough, with the help of that "forward child understanding," to seize the meaning that underlies all such scenes, and to identify, therefrom, their actual author, "it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room"; or, in other words, it means the extinction of the actual author from the consciousness of his audience. There follows Audrey's question :—

> Is it ("poetical") honest in deed and word? is it a true thing?

i.e. is this poetry just simply truthful speech, meaning no more, and no less, than it says? To which Touchstone :—

> No, truly; for the truest poetry is the most feigning;

which Shakespeare's certainly is; since we shall see, again and again, in the course of this study, passages of exalted poetry, which have, nevertheless, beyond question, a profound, and intensely significant second meaning. Touchstone's jest :—

> Honesty coupled to beauty is to have honey as sauce to sugar—

is interesting, because it recalls, at once, Ophelia's words to Hamlet (III, 1)—

> Could beauty, my lord, have better commerce than with honesty?

In both cases, be it noted, the man in the duologue here stands for Shakespeare himself; the woman being, in one case his mistress, in the other his wife.

The duologue in IV, 1, between Jaques and Rosalind is very Oxfordian, in its fantastic exposition of his many-sided melancholy; and it touches once more the theme upon which we have seen the Earl continuously harping; namely his travels, which, it seems, have also provided him with fresh matter for constitutional fits of despondency. This condition of mind is :—

> JAQU. . . . a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects; and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.
>
> ROSA. A traveller! By my faith, you have great reason to be sad. I fear you have sold your lands to see other men's; then, to have seen much, and to have nothing, is to have rich eyes and poor hands.
>
> JAQU. Yes, I have gained my experience.
>
> ROS. And your experience makes you sad. I had rather have a fool to make me merry than experience to make me sad; and to travel for it too!

All this, I submit, is again pure Oxford; for it was notorious, at the time, that he did "sell his own lands to see other men's," as witness this extract from Capt. Ward's book: "A further six sales (of property) were made during the period of (Oxford's) foreign travel—no doubt to pay the heavy expenses travelling in those days involved." [1] Further, the very slanders which, as we have seen, magnified many times over in his brooding imagination, darkened, to some extent, his whole life—though they provided, in retrospect, the central theme of this merry comedy—were the very matter that brought him back, post-haste, from France, where he was when the news of Arundel's (Oliver's) plot reached him. Immediately upon Jaques' exit, in the same

[1] Appendix B, p. 354. The figures are compiled from the Patent Rolls in the Public Record Office.

scene, the theme is continued, by Rosalind, in Orlando's presence :—

> Farewell, Monsieur Traveller: look you lisp and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think that you have swam in a gondola.

In these lines you have again, to the very life, exactly the Oxford described by Gabriel Harvey, in "The Mirror of Tuscany," including praise of foreign lands, the fantastical attire, the despondencies, and a reference to Venice, which Oxford visited in 1576.

Act V opens with the "William" scene, upon which I have already commented; and, lastly, there is significance, I think, in this passage, at the close of the play :—

> JAQ. If I heard you rightly,
> The Duke hath put on a religious life
> And thrown into neglect the pompous court?
> JAQ. DE B. He hath.
> JAQ. To him will I: out of these convertites?
> There is much matter to be heard and learn'd.

The "matter" here referred to, as I read "As You Like It," included the Shakesperean plays; and among the convertites must, certainly, be numbered Oxford-Shakespeare himself; since few readers, I imagine, will challenge my suggestion, that the lofty nobleness of the later plays, in common with the wisdom of these earlier ones, stands as proof positive of their author's conversion, from the folly and wildness of his young manhood.[1]

[1] For example, Lear's invocation to the storm; and all the exalted cipher language throughout that play spoken by Kent (Oxford).

## "TWELFTH NIGHT"

Since the Sylvius-Phœbe-Rosalind scenes, of "As You Like It," seem, beyond question, to have formed the basis of several Orsino-Olivia-Viola scenes, in "Twelfth Night," it is a fair inference, supported by the evidence, as a whole, that both plays, in their final form, were written nearly together; somewhere about 1598; but the key-date of "As You Like It," we saw, was 1589, while the key-date of this particular play goes back to the time of the St. Bartholomew massacre (1572)—referred to, by Olivia, as the "brother's dead love, which she would keep fresh and lasting in her sad remembrance"—and also to the later renewal of the negotiations for the Alençon marriage. The historic originals of the characters of the play are, Elizabeth herself, as Olivia[1]; Alençon as Orsino; La Môle as Viola; Sir Christopher Hatton (with Marchaumont) as Malvolio; Philip Sidney (probably with Fervaques) as Sir Andrew Aguecheek; and, as I shall shew, presently, Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, as Sir Toby Belch.

The identification of Sir Philip Sidney, as Sir Andrew Aguecheek, briefly argued in my last book, is, of course, an important one, from the Oxonian point of view; because of the rivalry, both in love and letters, between the two men; and therefore, since certain critics have seen fit to deride that identification, I will strengthen it almost into certainty, with the following items of additional evidence, some of which occurred to me in the autumn of 1928, when present at a performance of "Twelfth Night," at the Old Vic.

The first of these points was the fact, remarked on by Sir Toby (I, 3), of Sir Andrew: "He speaks three or four languages, word for word without book, and hath all the good gifts of nature." Now I had recently been reading Fox Bourne's "Memoirs of Sir Philip Sidney"; and remembered that author's statement, that Sidney

[1] The name Olivia is also an anagram of Valois (Valoii).

was acquainted with four languages—Italian, Latin, French, and his native English—to which his friend, Languet, once urged him to add German, though Sidney leaned rather towards Greek. As for "all the good gifts of nature"—his father had written of him, "He hath the most rare virtues that ever I found in any man."

Continuing, Maria's retort to Sir Toby's eulogy, is, "He hath indeed almost natural; for besides that he's a fool he's a great quarreller." Andrew, it will be granted, was a great babbler; and in 1580 Sidney wrote, to his brother, a letter—containing, by the way, the phrase "Lord, how I have babbled!"[1]—concerning horsemanship and duelling. Further, Fox Bourne has admitted into his openly eulogistic biography the following letter, dated May 31, 1578, from Sidney to his secretary, Edmund Molyneux:

> If it be so you have played the very knave with me; and so I will make you know, if I have good proof of it. That for so much as is past. For that is to come, I assure you, before God, that if ever I know you do so much as read any letter I write my father without his commandment or my consent, I will thrust my dagger into you; and trust to it, for I speak in earnest—

which foolish epistle drew from the receiver, in Fox Bourne's words, "a dignified reproof with a touch of scorn." My own impression is that Andrew's famous letter is a deliberate satire, by Oxford, not only upon Sidney's quarrelsomeness, but also upon his epistolary style, at that time.

Watching that performance at the Vic., however, the point of evidence that I found most striking, was when Mr. Percy Walsh, as Sir Toby, spoke the lines from III, 4—

> He (Sir Andrew) is knight, dubb'd with unhatch'd rapier and on carpet consideration; but he's devil in a private brawl—

[1] Sidney writes, in another letter, of his own "weak mind."

[2] I think, however, that a part of Andrew's quarrelsomeness is derived from his French part-original, Fervaques.

for if, as I feel certain was the case, Sidney's physical courage was not held in high repute, among the young noblemen of Elizabeth's court, there is obvious personal satire in the last clause, and a still more significant gibe in the first two; since the words, "carpet consideration," and the rest, are an almost exact description of the actual circumstances in which Sidney received his knighthood, which were as follows:

In 1583 Queen Elizabeth wished to bestow the Order of the Garter upon the Polish prince, Casimir, who, unwilling to undertake a long journey from Central Europe, asked his English friend, Philip Sidney, to stand proxy for him, on the occasion. By the rules of the English court, however, no one might stand proxy for the bestowal of one of the higher orders of knighthood, unless, and until, he himself were a Knight. Elizabeth, accordingly, knighted Sidney on the spot; to enable him to stand proxy for his friend; and Oxford-Shakespeare, who may well have been present, on the occasion —though William, the actor, had not yet left Stratford— took note of what passed, and did not fail to make use of the incident, when time brought him opportunity dramatically to satirize his rival.

In my last book, "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists,"—the main theses of which not a single critic has been able to shake—I shewed, beyond reasonable doubt, the historic identities of most of the principal characters of "Twelfth Night," excepting Sir Toby, concerning whom, at that time, I was unable to gather any definitely guiding clues; principally for the reason that, believing Aguecheek to be based mainly upon Fervaques—whereas I now believe him to be based mainly upon Philip Sidney—I was looking for Olivia's uncle among Alençon's French suite, instead of in Elizabeth's court. Realizing, soon after, my mistake, I took up R. Fox Bourne's "Memoirs of Philip Sidney," and reading therein (p. 181) concerning Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, that,

"He was kinsman to the queen, and in his youth she had helped to reclaim him from the prodigality into which he had fallen, by swearing that she would never know him until he knew himself"—

I felt hopeful that, at last, in this kinsman to Elizabeth-Olivia, I should, probably, find my man; more especially when I noted that his age—eighteen years older than that of Sidney—was exactly the traditional age of Sir Toby, relative to Sir Andrew, in the play, as ordinarily put upon the stage.

First, let me touch upon his relationship with Queen Elizabeth, who, as Olivia, in "Twelfth Night," is described as Sir Toby's niece. Thomas Sackville was descended from one of the most important families of Sussex and Kent; his grandmother being Margaret, daughter of Sir William Bulleyne, sister to Thomas, Earl of Wiltshire and Ormond, and aunt, therefore, to Queen Elizabeth's mother, Anne Boleyn.[1] "His father," adds Cooper, "A Privy Counsellor, was so careful that he acquired the title of Fill-Sack." This was significant; because, when first my eye had caught the name of Sackville, as being a probable original of Sir Toby, I converted it, mentally, at once, into Sack-fill; thinking it very possible, that, if my surmise were correct, the squeezing of a sack, well filled with sack—if such a feat be possible—may have first sounded, in Shakespeare's ear, the name "Belch."[2] A reading of the above quoted words, relative to his father's nick-name, happily corroborated my guess.

A little further investigation soon produced other evidences, in addition to parentage, age, name, and friendship with Sidney; all fitting in with Sir Toby's place, and character, in "Twelfth Night."

[1] E. W. Durrant Cooper's edition of "Gorboduc" (1847), Introduction, pp. lix-lx.

[2] The Christian name Toby may be from the first letters of the Earl's signature, "*Tho.* Buckhurst."

"Rich, cultivated, sagacious,[1] and favoured by the queen, he possessed all the qualifications for playing a prominent part in politics, diplomacy and court society."

Thus the "Dictionary of National Biography" informs us; and the ultimate success of his long career—he died in 1608, at the age of 72—shows that he found means to overcome those youthful extravagancies, financial prodigality, and "immoderate courses"—including, no doubt, drunkenness—which angered Elizabeth, as much as Sir Toby's delinquencies exasperated Olivia. The Queen, indeed, as quoted by George Abbott, Dean of Winchester, in his funeral-sermon upon Lord Buckhurst (1608), had referred, not long before her own death, in 1603, to the return of Buckhurst to London from Rome, in 1566.

"His coming unto our court where on divers occasions he bountifully feasted Her Highness and Her Nobles, as he did to forren Embassadors. At that time he entertained Musitians the most curious, which any where he could have, and therein his Lordship excelled unto his dying day. Then was his discourse judicious, but yet wittie and delightful. Thus he was in his young days a scholar, and a traveller, and a courtier of speciall estimation."

Most of the above is, clearly, very close to Sir Toby; whether one considers his penchant for entertaining "Musitians"—such, for example, as Feste—"the most curious which any where he could have," or whether one listens to that "discourse judicious, but yet wittie and delightful," which is so wholly true of Sir Toby's dialogue. Personally, I have no doubt at all, that the styles of Belch and Aguecheek, in "Twelfth Night," are both directly modelled upon the actual talk of Buckhurst and Sidney.

By the year 1560, when Oxford was ten years old, Sackville, then twenty-four, was already known as a poet;

[1] Toby, when sober, shews remarkable sagacity throughout the comedy.

and it was in that year that Jasper Heywood, in a rhymed address, or preface, to his translation of Seneca's "Thyestes," wrote :—

> There Sackvylde's Sonnets sweetly sauste,
> And featly fyned bee :
> There Norton's Ditties do delight,
> There Yelverton's do flee
> Well pewrde with pen : such young men three
> As weene thou mightst againe,
> To be begotten as Pallas was
> Of myghtie Jove his brayne—

lines that, when read in conjunction with facts already set down, as also with the singing clown's entry, in "Twelfth Night" III, 3, followed immediately by—

> Did you never see the picture of "we three ?"—

and by the love-song, "Mistress Mine," suggest that, as Durrant Cooper remarks, "the sonnets and ditties of such young men three" may well have been published together, in some volume that has not come down to us. Feste's line may have been an open reference to such a volume; or to a picture of the three authors, inserted in it.

That Buckhurst was a favourite with the queen is certain ; for he wrote, in his will, that,

> In his younger days he was selected by her particular choice and liking to a continual private attendance upon her own person ;

and Elizabeth's sincere attachment is further evidenced by her declaration to him, in the very year of the "we three" rhyme, that he must amend his prodigalities, or "she would not know him till he knew himself," all of which matches, exactly, the reproaches aimed at Sir Toby, by Olivia.

That Buckhurst, in obedience to his queen, did happily reform, seems certain, by the sequel ; though some authorities attribute his reformation less to royal persuasion, than to the sense of deep indignity he

suffered, from being kept waiting by an alderman, to whom he had applied for a loan of money! One wonders whether Sir Philip Sidney was ever, like Sir Andrew, one of those who had the pleasure of financing Buckhurst—"Send for more money, knight (*T.N.*, II, 3); and "I have been dear to him, lad, two thousand strong or so" (*T.N.*, III, 2).

Sackville was knighted by the Duke of Norfolk, Oxford's cousin, in the queen's presence, on June 8, 1567, and, during the following year, 1568, he links himself directly with the basic theme of "Twelfth Night," when, having been sent on a mission to France, he succeeded, according to Cecil's diary, in persuading the Queen-Mother, Catherine de Medicis, "to make a motion" for the marriage of Queen Elizabeth to her second son, the Duke of Anjou, afterwards King Henry III—an intrigue which, as is well known, was subsequently taken up, much more seriously, and actively prosecuted, by Henry's younger brother, Francis (Alençon). It is, moreover, pertinent to our subject to remember that, in 1571, one year before the massacre of St. Bartholomew, —an event which gives the key-date for "Twelfth Night,"—Sackville went to France again, to congratulate Charles IX upon his marriage with Elizabeth of Austria; and there again did what he could to forward the Anjou suit; privately assuring Katharine that his royal mistress was "bent on going through with it"—a phrase that is not very far from the words used by Sir Toby, to Sir Andrew, another suitor for the hand of Olivia: "If thou hast her not i' the end, call me cut" (*T.N.*, II, 3). Nor must it be overlooked, in this connection, that Oxford himself was a strong supporter of the Alençon marriage.

Further considerations—all assisting, by historical or literary connection, the probability of Buckhurst being Sir Toby—are that, in 1591, on the death of Sir Christopher Hatton (Malvolio), Buckhurst was one of the Commissioners who held the Great Seal; that on the death

of Burleigh in 1598, he took over the Lord Treasurership, thus succeeding, in that office, one whom, also, Shakespeare was to caricature, as Polonius in "Hamlet": and, lastly, it is quite obvious that, as part author of "the earliest extant piece which can with any fitness be called a tragedy; and . . . the first play in the English language written in blank verse," Buckhurst was one in whom Oxford, as fellow courtier, poet, and dramatist, in direct hierarchy of descent, must, necessarily, take interest.

Concerning the dates of the play, those last given refer to the fifteen-'eighties, and so does Sir Andrew's reference to the Brownists (III,2), Robert Browne having been excommunicated in 1586; but the "Map of the Indies," referred to by Maria, dates from 1579;[1] so that the chronology of this comedy seems to range over both the 'seventies and the 'eighties; topical allusions being added, probably, during various revisions of the early draft.

Capt. Holland has suggested a number of possible Oxford allusions, in the text;[2] the most striking of which are the frequent variations of the word, "Excellency," which, he thinks, may be a gibe at Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester, who, when in Flanders, in 1587, was given the title of "Excellency," by the Dutch. Orsino, though, historically, Anjou-Alençon, is, I think, beyond doubt, largely coloured—much as Richard II is—by Oxford's own personality; the Duke's æsthetically sensuous raptures and fantasies, and his langourously poetical poses—with much sincere, and warm, humanity lying, nevertheless, behind them—being altogether characteristic of Edward de Vere. Moreover, as we have seen in "Two Gentlemen,"[3] Oxford, very probably, had dramatized himself, already, as a suitor

[1] See "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," p. 23.
[2] See "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," pp. 50-60.
[3] See ante pp. 224, 225.

to Queen Elizabeth and did so again in "Romeo and Juliet." Capt. Holland boldly suggests that "M.O.A.I.," in the forged letter, to Malvolio, supposed to have been written by Olivia-Elizabeth, is intended to be read "*Mea Oxonia Amatus Ignotus.*"

## "MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"

"Much Ado," like "Twelfth Night," to which it comes very near, in date, is one of those transitional plays, wherein Shakespeare's mind, after hovering, characteristically, between comedy and tragedy, descends, once again, upon the comedy side; though when, some years later, he returns to the same theme, the treatment will be consistently tragic, and lightened by few gleams of humour. That the themes of "Much Ado," and "Othello," are, substantially, the same, my readers will, I hope, admit. Miss Winstanley, in her "Othello as the Tragedy of Italy," has shewn, conclusively, that the play, as we shall see, dramatizes the murder of Elizabeth of Valois, by Philip II of Spain, and also the treaty that was signed between Venice and Spain; and Capt. Holland in "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," [1] has pointed out that Don Pedro, Prince of Aragon, and Don John, his bastard brother, are based upon Philip of Spain and Philip's natural brother, Don John of Austria, who died in 1578. I wholly concur with Capt. Holland, in his view that both plays may be read as veiled apologies, by Oxford, for bad treatment of his own wife—a piece of marital brutality which was, to the Earl, a continual cause of subsequent remorse and regret. As for the other characters, I again agree with Capt. Holland, that Benedick is, probably, an adaptation of Oxford's name Bolebec, or Bullbeck, and that Beatrice, probably, stands for Lady Mary Sidney—the title "Dear Lady Disdain"—more especially when spelt "Disdayne,"—as given her by Benedick, being almost an anagram of Sidney.[1]

The key-date of the play seems to be 1580; judging, first, by Benedick's remark in I, 1—"I look for an earthquake too then"—and, secondly, by the seeming reference to the Bull of Excommunication, that had been launched against Queen Elizabeth, by Pope Pius V, in

[1] pp. 38-43. [1] DISDAYNE = DA(ME) SIDNEY.

1570, and came to the fore again, as a topic, in 1580—the matter, probably, alluded to by Dogberry, when he advises that the learned writer be got "to set down our excommunication." Further, on July 7, 1580, a proclamation against building was issued, from Nonsuch palace, commanding

> "all manner of persons, of what quality soever they be, to desist and forbear from any new buildings of any house or tenement within *three miles* from any of the gates of London"—

a prohibition which—suggests Capt. Holland—may be jocularly referred to in I, 1—

> CLAUDIO. . . . from my house, if I had it—
> DON PEDRO. The sixth of July: your loving friend, Benedick.

The supposition is, perhaps, supported by the fact that Oxford's house at Hackney, known as King's Place, was, approximately, three miles north of Bishopsgate.

The lighter, merrier, side of Oxford, as I have said, is expressed in Benedick, as surely as the darker and more saturnine qualities of his mind come out in Don John, whose phrase, "I cannot hide what I am," and so forth, in I, 3, recalls, at once, sonnet 107/121—

> No, I am that I am, and they that level
> At my abuses reckon up their own—

the first six words of this quotation repeating, exactly, Oxford's own words, in a letter to Burleigh of 1584.[1] Don John's subsequent complaints :—

> I am trusted with a muzzle, and enfranchized with a clog; therefore I have decreed not to sing in my cage. If I had my mouth, I would bite; if I had my liberty, I would do my liking; in the meantime let me be that I am, and seek not to alter me—

are, I am convinced, yet another of the secret allusions, scattered throughout the plays, to the compulsory retirement, and muzzling, of Oxford, and to the "all

[1] See ante p. 188.

use" he makes of it, as poet and dramatist. That Don John and Benedick are linked closely together, in the dramatist's mind, as two widely differing aspects of their creator's own complex personality, seems perfectly clear, from the next scene of his play (II, 1), wherein Leonato and his guests discuss Don John :—

HERO. He is of a very melancholy disposition.

BEAT. He were an excellent man that were made just in the midway between him and Benedick: the one is too like an image and says nothing, and the other too like my lady's eldest son, evermore tattling.

LEON. Then half Signior Benedick's tongue in Count John's mouth, and half Count John's melancholy in Signior Benedick's face—

a passage which seems openly to hint that the merry and melancholy couple make, between them, one man—and that a very "excellent" one—much as Jaques and Touchstone do, in "As You Like It." The first three acts of "Much Ado," as Capt. Holland has pointed out, contain several allusions that are probably Oxfordian; but the only unchallengeable one is in III, 4—

MARG. Nothing I; but God send everyone their heart's desire!

HERO. These gloves the Count sent me; they are an excellent perfume:

which recalls again the incident, already made use of by Shakespeare, in "Two Gentlemen," of the presentation of scented gloves, by Oxford, to Queen Elizabeth.[1]

The fourth act provides, in its first scene, a couplet from Claudio to Hero :—

> You are more intemperate in your blood
> Than Venus, or those pamper'd animals
> That rage in savage sensuality.

which is interesting, as an echo, apparently, of "Venus and Adonis," with its boar motive;[2] though the central

[1] See ante pp. 224, 225.

[2] It reminds one also of the Bussy-Monsieur duologue, in Chapman's "Bussy d'Ambois," III, 2, mainly imitated from "Macbeth" —"I think thee a man," etc.

speech of this act, from an Oxford view-point, is that of the Friar, the first part of which I quote at length (IV, 1).

LEON. What shall become of this? what will this do?
FRIAR. Marry, this, well carried, shall on her behalf
Change slander to remorse; that is some good.
But not for that dream I on this strange course,
But on this travail look for greater birth.
She dying, as it must be so maintain'd,
Upon the instant that she was accused,
Shall be lamented, pitied and excused
Of every hearer, for it so falls out,
That what we have we prize not to the worth
Whiles we enjoy it; but being lack'd and lost,
Why, then we rack the value, then we find
The virtue that possession would not show us
Whiles it was ours. So will it fare with Claudio.
When he shall hear she died upon his words,
The idea of her life shall sweetly creep
Into his study of imagination;
And every lovely organ of her life
Shall come apparrell'd in more precious habit,
More moving-delicate and full of life,
Into the eye and prospect of his soul,
Than when she lived indeed.

In this passage I find something of the unconsciously, or consciously, prophetic, fitting in, very appositely, with Oxford's own experience, as "Shakespeare," and with that of posterity, as the favoured inheritors of his work. Oxford's career, whether as courtier or artist, was, to some extent, permanently marred by slander; an effect contributed to by his own admitted youthful misdeeds or indiscretions; which, though we do not know exactly what form they took, seem—in conjunction with those falsely attributed to him—to have shadowed, long and deeply, his happiness. Time, however, was making amends; not merely by mitigating "slander to remorse," as we have seen, for example, in Oliver's case, in "As You Like It"; but also, as the immediate outcome of these wrongs and misdemeanours,

in transmuting evil to good, by providing their subject with opportunity, and leisure, gloriously to erase from his own mind and memory, as well as from the world's consciousness, all evil doing, whether actual, or merely imputed, by utterances, on the whole, the noblest, and most compelling, that ever, for the delight and profit of generations to come were bequeathed to the English-speaking races. Hero, I think, here stands unquestionably for the plays, just as do Juliet and Audrey, in close connection with Shakespeare himself as their author; and thus it has fared with Shakespeare, as the Friar foretold that it would fare with Claudio; our present conception of the man, and of his work, which so completely, and perfectly, expresses him, broadening in our imaginations, until we see Shakespeare transfigured :—

> And every lovely organ of her life
> Shall come apparrell'd in more precious habit,
> More moving-delicate and full of life,
> Into the eye and prospect of our souls
> Than when he lived indeed.

That prophecy grows in power, when we remember, that, in the latest year for this comedy, 1598, the mighty symbolic tragedies, upon which his loftiest and greatest glory rest, had probably not yet been completed.[1] Posterity, in due course, has "found the virtue," that "possession would not show" to the men and women of Shakespeare's own time.

Throughout this part of the play, the slander-motive continues to dominate; and is represented, again and again, in the text :—"She is slandered, she is undone" (IV, 1); "Thy slander hath gone through and through her heart" (V, 1); "slander'd to death by villains" (V, 1); nor can there, I think, be any doubt that Oxford here, under the guise of slanders heaped upon Hero, is

[1] "Romeo and Juliet" and "Richard II" being both in the nature of lyrical dramatic poems, rather than tragedies, in the wider sense of that term.

recalling those of which he himself, and probably his first wife also were both, to some extent, the victims—a supposition borne out by the following passage, and its sequel (V, 2) :—

> BEAT. It appears not in this confession : there's not one wise man among twenty that will praise himself.
>
> BENE. An old, an old instance, Beatrice, that lived in the time of good neighbours. If a man do not erect in this age his own tomb ere he dies, he shall live no longer in monument than the bell rings and the widow weeps.
>
> BEAT. And how long is that, think you ?
>
> BENE. Question. Why, an hour in clamour, and a quarter in rheum : therefore is it most expedient for the wise, if Don Worm, his conscience, find no impediment to the contrary, to be the trumpet of his own virtues, as I am to myself. So much for praising myself, who, I myself will bear witness is praiseworthy, and now tell me, how doth your cousin ?

Here there seems to me to be a deep, and intentional, analogy between Hero's position, who, it will be given out, is shortly to be laid in a tomb, and Oxford's, who, metaphorically speaking, is already within one ; seeing that he has withdrawn from public life, and is working, incognito, upon labours, which, in " powerful rhyme," are to build him a tomb for all eternity, that

> Not marble nor the gilded monuments
> Of princes shall outlive.

The fact that Oxford is really speaking for himself, seems to be made clear by the " Don Worm, his conscience " phrase—the French for " worm," by the way, as Capt. Holland has noted, being " ver." Is it not fascinating to observe, in this play, as also in " As You Like It," how Shakespeare, who, very soon, is to follow these comedies with tragedies, which, as we shall see, in the next chapter, are largely symbolic, is already using groups of two characters, or three—Hero, Benedick and Don John—as varying representatives of his diverse, any many-sided character, and of the plays which so

marvellously express it; for, immediately following upon the passage above quoted, enters Ursula, with the message:—

Don John, who is the author of all, is fled and gone—

or, in other words, the wild, headstrong, unruly side of Oxford, one cause of all the troubles, along with his slanderer, the principal cause, is vanished, leaving the ground free, henceforth, for that nobler, and far more real, Oxford, who, if I have written wisely here, is, though our nation does not yet know it, her chiefest glory in letters, and one of the world's greatest moralists of all time. Again, within a few lines, comes the church-scene (V, 3), and the reading of the scroll, by Claudio:—

Done to death by slanderous tongues
Was the Hero that here lies:
Death, in guerdon of her wrongs,
Gives her fame that never dies:
So the life that died with shame
Lives in death with glorious fame.

Is it not true of our national hero, Shakespeare,[1] that he "lives in death with glorious fame?"; and, in view of what has gone before, will any reader deny that the last three lines, of Clauio's reading:—

Hang thou there upon the tomb,
Praising her when I am dumb.
Now music, sound, and sing your solemn hymn—

—now that Claudio and Claudio's Hero both are dumb—remain literally true of the plays which, hung like a scroll about his tomb, do, indeed, praise Shakespeare's sexless universality, with music to charm every ear? I will leave a last word, upon "Much Ado," with Don Pedro and Leonato:

The former Hero! Hero that is dead!
She died, my lord, but whiles her slander lived.[2]

[1] *Cf.* Thomas Carlyle, in "Heroes and Hero-Worship," the Hero as Man-of-Letters.

[2] A quarto edition of "Much Ado" appeared in 1600:—the only known edition before the Folio of 1623.

## "ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL"

This play, with its rhyming lines, sonnet-like letters, and lyrical dialogues and speeches, is, very probably, as Sir Israel Gollancz, and others, have supposed, a revision of "Love's Labour's Won," the companion play to "Love's Labour's Lost," mentioned by Meres, in his "Palladis Tamia" of 1598. Its lyrical manner, as a companion play, certainly recalls "Love's Labour's Lost," a significant fact, when one remembers the closeness of that comedy to the sonnets, and the certainty, almost, that the courtier, Biron, therein, stands for Shakespeare himself, who, as we have seen, in the chapters on that play, is closely linked, through those sonnets, with the personality of Oxford himself. "Measure for Measure" also—the play which we shall next consider—is very close to "All's Well" in theme; yet, strange to say, the drama that the opening scenes of "All's Well" most vividly recalls, is neither its early companion play, nor "Measure for Measure," but "Hamlet," accompanied by the inescapable Oxford associations with which that tragedy so frequently confronts us. That Oxford is Bertram, in the comedy, as surely as he is the Prince of Denmark, in the tragedy, the opening lines of "All's Well" at once indicate.[1]

> COUNTESS. In delivering my son from me, I bury a second husband.
>
> BERTRAM. And in going, madam, I weep o'er my father's death anew: but I must attend his majesty's command, to whom I am now in ward, evermore in subjection.

Here you have, not merely the "second husband" motive, in the King's relation to the Countess, but also a young royal ward, her son, weeping anew his father's death, precisely as Oxford had done, when, as ward of Queen Elizabeth, he also mourned a parent lost. The

[1] Mr. J. T. Looney has argued this, unanswerably in "Shakespeare Identified."

parallel with "Hamlet" continues, in this passage of the same scene.

> COUNT. . . . The remembrance of her father never approaches her heart but the tyranny of her sorrows takes all livelihood from her cheek. No more of this, Helena, go to, no more; lest it be rather thought you affect a sorrow than to have——
>
> HELENA. I do affect a sorrow, indeed, but I have it too.
>
> LAFEU. Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead; excessive grief the enemy to the living.
>
> COUNT. If the living be enemy to the grief, the excess makes it soon mortal.
>
> BERT. Madam, I desire your holy wishes.
>
> LAFEU. How understand we that?
>
> COUNT. Be thou blest, Bertram, and succeed thy father
> In manners, as in shape! thy blood and virtue
> Contend for empire in thee, and thy goodness
> Share with thy birthright! Love all, trust a few,
> Do wrong to none, be able for thine enemy
> Rather in power than use; and keep thy friend
> Under thy own life's key: be check'd for silence,
> But never tax'd for speech. What heaven more will,
> That thee may furnish, and my prayers pluck down,
> Fall on thy head! Farewell, my lord.

Hereabouts, the parallels with "Hamlet," I, 2, are obvious; the Countess's reproach to Helena, concerning "affecting a sorrow," and Helena's retort, that she "has it," being exactly matched by Hamlet's answer, to his mother's charge of "seeming":—

> Seems, madam, nay it is; I know not seems.

Further, Lafeu's admonition to Helena:—

> Moderate lamentation is the right of the dead; excessive grief the enemy to the living—

is paraphrased in the king's speech to Hamlet, upon the impropriety of persevering "in obstinate condolement." Again, the Countess's speech to Bertram is very near, both in manner and matter, to the well-known advice of Polonius to Laertes, delivered in the next

scene of the "Hamlet" play. Some of this talk, both in "Hamlet" and "All's Well," I take to hold, probably, the substance of words actually spoken to Oxford, by the Queen and Burleigh, when he, a royal ward, was mourning for his father; and I have no doubt whatever that, when writing "Hamlet," Oxford had the dialogue of "All's Well" before him. Readers, however, must not draw the conclusion that Queen Elizabeth is, historically, Queen Gertrude; since I shall shew, later on,[1] that her original is, mainly, Mary, Queen of Scots. The analogies between "All's Well" and "Hamlet" may be pushed further yet; for just as Oxford, after his father's death, is living in the same house as Burleigh's daughter, Anne Cecil, a maid of comparatively humble birth, whom, ultimately, he marries, so here, Helena, a doctor's daughter, in love with the high-born young ward, Bertram—whom, also, she ultimately marries—is lamenting the fact,

> That I should love a bright particular star,[2]
> And think to wed it, he is so far above me.

The second scene of the first act shews some parentage with "Love's Labour's Lost," as also with "Two Gentlemen"; this time in the matter of dates; for the former play, as we have seen, gives the king's death—that of Charles IX in 1574—as synchronizing with the close of the play, while "Two Gentlemen" is much concerned with Oxford's travels in Italy, in 1575–76. The theme of "All's Well" includes the wars of the Florentines and Senoys (Siennese), otherwise the people of Flanders and Spain, a conflict which was recommenced in 1578; Shakespeare's device, in thus juggling with the names, being the more significant for the fact, pointed out by Capt. Holland, that this is not the only occasion upon which he allowed Florence to stand for Flanders—a very natural trick, when we remember that

[1] See post pp. 330–333.

[2] This may be a reference to the mullet or star, on the Oxford coat-of-arms.

Oxford had returned, only two years before, from this capital of his beloved Tuscany.

Act I, Scene 3, supplies some more very interesting parallels; for the two lines by Helena, in which that lady again bewails the humble origin, which, as she fears, bars her from marriage with a man of rank :—

> My master, my dear lord he is; and I
> His servant live, and will his vassal die—

are, as Mr. Looney has noted,[1] close, alike in word and sentiment, to de Vere's "Echo" poem, which—long before I was aware of this parallel with Helena of "All's Well"—I had recognized, as being closely connected with Helena's counterpart, Ophelia. Further, the Countess's lines, which follow almost immediately :—

> You, Helen, you might be my daughter-in-law—

seem to reappear, more skilfully versified, in Gertrude's,

> I hoped thou should'st have been my Hamlet's wife.

With the first scene of Act II, we reach this dialogue :—

> SEC. LORD. O, 'tis brave wars!
> PAROLLES. Most admirable: I have seen those wars.
> BERTR. I am commanded here, and kept a coil with "Too young," and "the next year," and "'tis too early."
> PAROLLES. An thy mind stand stand to't, boy, steal away bravely.
> BERTRAM. I shall stay here the forehorse to a smock,
> Creaking my shoes on the plain masonry,
> Till honour be bought up, and no sword worn
> But one to dance with! By Heaven, I'll steal away.

Now this passage exactly portrays the restless, dissatisfied, ambitious young Oxford's mind, during those early 'seventies, with which this play is concerned; when the Earl, chafing at being nothing better than "forehorse to a smock"—whom I take to be Elizabeth—and the court's best dancer, while he longed to be its foremost captain, and, eventually, its dominant statesman, too, decides, "By heaven! I'll steal away!" and

[1] "Shakespeare Identified," p. 254.

does so, on July, 1574, to this very Flanders, for which Florence stands in the play—Florence where, two years later, he will actually find himself—in the lovely Tuscan city standing, as Bertram phrases it (II, 4), among

those Italian fields
Where noble fellows strike.

As for all the rupture with his wife, that follows in Oxford's history, and is recounted, at length, in Capt. Ward's book,[1] is it not about as certain as any thing can be, that such words as Bertram's (III, 2)—

I have wedded her, not bedded her; and sworn to make the not eternal—

are simply a dramatized version of the actual facts, exaggerated, probably, and twisted into the service of the play? So determined, indeed, is the dramatist, to give clues to the identity of Bertram, that he opens III, 2, from which I last quoted, with the following dialogue:—

CLOWN. By my troth, I take my young lord (Bertram) to be a very melancholy man.

COUNT. By what observance, I pray you?

CLOWN. Why, he will look upon his boot and sing; mend the ruff and sing; ask questions and sing; pick his teeth and sing. I know a man that had this trick of melancholy sold a goodly manor for a song.

Those who read, with any care, my analysis of "As You Like It," a few pages back, will not fail to note that all this concerning the man who with a "trick of melancholy sold a goodly manor for a song," parallels, exactly, the melancholy Jaques-Oxford, who, in IV, 3, of that comedy,[2] is mentioned as having sold his own lands, "that he might see other men's"; which the young Earl actually did, in 1575. In view of the intimate personal details, mentioned in this play, and its unmistakably close connection with Oxford's life and history, as well, apparently, as with that of his first wife, it is not surprising to know that we have no

[1] pp. 113-129. [2] See ante pp. 270–271.

record of a single stage performance of "All's Well," during Shakespeare's day, nor of any printed copies, before the First Folio of 1623.

The third scene of Act IV provides, in the duologue between the two lords :—

> SEC. LORD. I hear there is an overture of peace.
> FIRST LORD. Nay, I assure you, a peace concluded.

a possible clue to the date of the play's conclusion, in its first form; since the actual peace negotiations, at Cologne, were entered upon in May, 1579, while the winter of that same year provided, in London's severe snowfall, a clue to the allusion made by Parolles, in the same scene, to his soldiers, who :—

> dare not shake the snow from off their cassocks, lest they shake themselves to pieces.[1]

[1] Capt. Holland, noting this in "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," adds that we have here the only reference to snow in Shakespeare.

## "MEASURE FOR MEASURE"

We have just seen that a comedy intensely personal to Oxford, namely "All's Well That Ends Well," was never acted, so far as we know, during Shakespeare's lifetime, as, hitherto, reckoned, and did not appear in print before the First Folio of 1623. This is true also of "Measure for Measure," a comedy much akin to "All's Well"; and it may be taken as almost certain, that the reasons which kept them from the stage were the same in both cases—the intimate nature of their theme. It is, I think, quite probable that "Hamlet" also, with which both plays are closely related—and which is no less intensely personal to Oxford—would also have been kept back until the Folio, had not a piratical publication, in 1603, compelled the issue of the more perfect text, in the second quarto of 1604, the year of Oxford's death.

The relation of "Measure for Measure" to "Hamlet"; and the similarity, in conception, and dialogue, of its reflections on life and death, have been pointed out by many critics. Angelo's prayer, in II, 4—

> When I would pray and think, I think and pray
> To several subjects. Heaven hath my empty words;
> Whilst my invention, hearing not my tongue,
> Anchors on Isabel: Heaven in my mouth,
> As if I did but only chew his name;
> And in my heart the strong and swelling evil
> Of my conception—

paraphrases, almost, the king's prayer in "Hamlet"; and Isabella's words to Claudio, concerning his "rank offence," recall the words of Claudius opening that same speech (III, 3)—

> O, my offence is rank, it smells to heaven.

But the most interesting passage, for the purpose of this book, is the duologue in III, 2, between Lucio and the Duke, of whom the latter, vanishing, and reappearing

in disguise, is just another of those cryptic Oxfordian characters, who, like Jacques, Touchstone, and even Hero, symbolize the concealed identity of the poet; while Lucio is his lighter and familiar other self, as Benedick is relatively to Don John.

LUCIO. Who, not the Duke? yes, your beggar of fifty; and his use was to put a ducat in her clack-dish: the Duke had crotchets in him. He would be drunk too; that let me inform you.

DUKE. You do wrong him, surely.

LUCIO. Sir, I was an inward of his. A shy fellow was the Duke: and I believe I know the cause of his withdrawing.

DUKE. What, I prithee, might be the cause?

LUCIO. No, pardon; 'tis a secret must be locked within the teeth and lips: but this I can let you understand, the greater file of the subject held the Duke to be wise.

DUKE. Wise! why, no question but he was.

LUCIO. A very superficial, ignorant, unweighing fellow.

DUKE. Either this is envy in you, folly, or mistaking: the very stream of his life and the business he hath helmed must, upon a warranted need, give him a better proclamation. Let him be but testimonied in his own bringings forth, and he shall appear to the envious a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier. Therefore you speak unskilfully; or if your knowledge be more, it is much darkened in your malice.

LUCIO. Sir, I know him and I love him.

In the light of what has gone before, there can, I submit, be little doubt concerning the inner meaning of this passage. The Duke, a "beggar of fifty," is, again, the serious and mature Oxford, born in 1550, and, therefore, fifty-three years old in 1603—the date usually given to the play—although this passage points to 1600, as the correct one; very near to the time when Shakespeare would be writing "Hamlet."

This Duke, be it observed, "had crotchets in him," and "would get drunk"—faults true, no doubt, in each item, of the juvenile Oxford; wherefore, when the

Duke demurs to these charges, Lucio, who is simply the younger, more flippant, and vivacious Oxford—standing in similar relation to the elder, gloomier one as Touchstone does to Jaques, Benedick to Don John, and Hero to Claudio—replies, "I was an inward of his," meaning that he had shared the Duke's inmost thoughts, which, as being another aspect of the same personality, he most certainly had. Thus he knows the cause of the Duke's withdrawal, but, in common with other characters in the other plays, who hold the same secret, will not reveal it, even to his second self, the Duke :—"'tis a secret must be locked within the teeth and the lips." A moment later the Duke is speaking of himself, as "a scholar, a statesman, and a soldier," the last two of which careers were certainly among Oxford's early ambitions ; that phrase, also, be it noted, again recalling "Hamlet," in Ophelia's line :—

> The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's eye, tongue, sword ;

while the Duke's words to Lucio, in the same scene (III, 2), before the entry of Escalus :—

> No might nor greatness in mortality
> Can censure 'scape ; back-wounding calumny
> The whitest virtue strikes—

reintroduces the calumny-theme, that is never long absent, when Oxford comes, personally, into the plays ; and recalls Hamlet's words, to Ophelia, spoken but a few moments before Ophelia's line, above quoted :—

> Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.

Another interesting reference is that in I, 2, to the "sanctimonius pirate," who had put forth to sea with the ten commandments, from the "table" of which he had scraped out one—"Thou shalt not steal"—an incident that, at once, suggests the stealing of Oxford's baggage, by a pirate, referred to in "Hamlet," IV, 6,[1]

[1] Horatio (reading Hamlet's letter) :—"A pirate of very warlike appointment gave us chase." The "sanctimonious" character

when the Earl, in 1576, was returning from Italy, brought home by these calumnies, just alluded to in this play. In this connection, I must not forget to point out the reference, in IV, 1, to Isabella, as a white "votarist of St. Clare," an order established by the famous convert of Francis of Assisi, in Umbria, a town visited, perhaps, by Oxford during his travels.

This long series of parallels with "Hamlet," in "All's Well," and "Measure for Measure" make it most probable that both plays were written shortly before "Hamlet"; and were freely used, by Oxford, as quarrying-grounds for situation and dialogue in the tragedy.

of the pirate, I suppose to be taken, by Oxford, direct from life. It is just such a trait as would have interested him.

# CHAPTER X

## OXFORD IN THE SHAKESPEREAN TRAGEDIES

### "Romeo and Juliet"—"Othello"—"Hamlet."

### "ROMEO AND JULIET"

MANY of the Shakesperean plays, as we have seen, and shall see again, are intimately personal; but "Romeo and Juliet" is among the most directly conclusive of them all, in its Oxonian allusions; the play, indeed, fitting in so closely, and at so many points, with Oxford's family history, and so intimately identifying itself with the mentality, modes of thought, and tricks of expression, visible in the sonnets, and in the plays, that I regard it as one of the strongest among the many links in the long chain of evidence connecting him with the authorship.

First of all, to be considered, is the significance of its setting—

> In fair Verona where we lay our scene.

It is a commonplace of criticism to observe, as Philarete Chasles has done—and I had long known it to be true of this play—that "the very form of the language comes from the south"; and that the antique tale "breathes the very spirit of Italy's national records, her old family feuds, the amorous and bloody intrigues which fill her annals"; but it was not until, for the first time, in the spring of 1929, I wandered through Umbria and Tuscany, that I realized, personally, the close affinity of "Romeo and Juliet" with its setting, and, if I may so phrase it, *knew* that the author of the tragedy must have been

intimately acquainted with Italy.[1] The psychological unity between the play and the country, was, one felt, too complete and spontaneous to be the outcome of mere hearsay or book-reading; even in a mind so sensitive as Shakespeare's.[2] But to the tragedy.

We are not long kept waiting for clues; since, at once, almost, in the opening scene, and by a method very similar to that which we have already noticed in "As You Like It," "Measure for Measure," and other plays, we find introduced the corresponding motive of secrecy, or concealed identity; the mystery-character, as before, standing for, and voicing, Oxford; this time under the disguise of Romeo. The speakers are Montague and Benvolio (I, 1).

BEN. Towards him I made; but he was ware of me,
And stole into the covert of the wood:
I, measuring his affections by my own,
Which then most sought where most might not be found,
. . . gladly shunn'd who gladly fled from me.
MON. Many a morning hath he there been seen,
With tears augmenting the fresh morning's dew,

Away from light steals home my heavy son,
And private in his chamber pens himself,
Shuts up his windows, locks fair daylight out,
And make himself an artificial night:

BEN. Have you importuned him by any means?
MON. Both by myself and many other friends:
But he, his own affection's counsellor,
Is to himself—I will not say how true—
But to himself so secret and so close,

[1] Before I had been an hour in Siena, where Oxford was in 1576, I was told of an individual, then resident in the town, who claimed direct descent from the de Veres, and owned a ring which, he asserted, bore engraved upon it the de Vere arms. My informant was then unaware of my identity, and did not know that I had so much as heard of the de Veres. Lack of time alone prevented me from further investigating the matter.

[2] I have touched upon the subject before, when discussing sonnet 66/33, see ante pp. 160, 172.

So far from sounding and discovery,
As is the bud hit with an envious worm

*Enter Romeo.*

BEN. See where he comes, so please you step aside,
I'll know his grievance, or be much denied.

Here, it will be observed, you have Oxford-Romeo making for himself "an artificial night . . . far from sounding and discovery," in a passage which immediately precedes his entry; just as, in "As You Like It," II, 5, you have Oxford-Jaques, after his "Greek invocation to call fools into a circle," leaving the stage, to "go sleep if I can"; and the Duke, just before Jaques's re-entry, in the seventh scene, harping upon the same theme :—

I think he be transform'd into a beast;
For I can no where find him like a man.

A few lines later, in "Romeo and Juliet" (I, 1), Romeo himself significantly echoes precisely the same idea :—

Tut, I have lost myself; I am not here;
This is not Romeo, he's some other where—[1]

whereupon he begins his groaning description of Rosaline, in whom, with her "Dian's wit," "strong proof of chastity well arm'd," and so forth, I detect a hint of Queen Elizabeth—a surmise which a later passage will tend to confirm.[2] Further on in the scene, Capulet, after inviting Paris to the ball, and advising him to

hear all, all see,
And like her most whose merit most shall be—

hands to his servant a paper, whereon are written the names of the guests; upon receipt of which the illiterate servant, as soon as he is alone, exclaims :—

I am sent to find those persons whose names are here writ, and can never find what names the writing person hath here writ. I must to the learned. In good time—

[1] The part of Kent, in "King Lear," also voicing Oxford, is written in precisely the same enigmatical style. See post pp. 364–368.

[2] See also post p. 308.

whereupon there immediately enters Romeo, who, as Oxford, the author of the play, is precisely the one person who *can* determine, for the unlearned, the identities of those "whose names are written here." Thus, beneath the surface of passage after passage, in play after play, did Shakespeare, the symbolist, insert clues to the fact that beneath the text lie hidden the historic identities of other characters, equally with his own.

Scene 3, of the first act, brings us, in the Nurse's long speech,[1] some very interesting, and suggestive, references, beginning with "Susan is with God"—words worth connecting with the fact that Oxford's brother-in-law, Thomas Cecil, had a daughter, Susanna, who died in 1575, and that the third of Oxford's daughters, by his first wife, Anne Cecil, was also named Susan.[2] There follows the well-known reference to the earthquake of 1580:—

> 'Tis since the earthquake now eleven years;
> And she was wean'd—

which seems to fix the key-date of the play at 1591; a year confirmed, moreover, by the first line of the play, wherein Sampson, declining to "carry coals," recalls—as Capt. Holland has duly noted [3]—the coal-feud, of the same year, between the Lord Mayor and citizens of London. Further, if, as I maintain, Romeo and Juliet are Oxford, and Elizabeth Trentham, that date again fits in; for it was in 1591, or early in 1592, that the marriage took place, of which the first-born was Henry, hero of the sonnets, and, afterwards, Eighteenth Earl of Oxford.

[1] It may interest some of my readers to know that the author of this book is the grandson of Mrs. Stirling, one of the best known representatives of the Nurse in stage history. She played, on the West-end stage, nearly all the Shakespearean leads, including Cordelia with Macready.

[2] Capt. Holland has propounded some ingenious theories concerning these names in "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," pp. 76, 77.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

The next scene, to claim attention, is the fourth of Act I, where Romeo, Mercutio, Benvolio, and other maskers, and torch-bearers, on their way to the Capulets' ball, continue the enigmatic and allusive talk scattered, with evident underlying intention, throughout the first act. This is the opening passage :—

ROM. Give me a torch : I am not for this ambling ;
Being but heavy, I will bear the light.
MER. Nay, gentle Romeo, we must have you dance.
ROM. Not I, believe me : you have dancing shoes
With nimble soles : I have a soul of lead
So stakes me to the ground, I cannot move.

Romeo, otherwise Edward de Vere, the best dancer at Elizabeth's court, and he whom the queen, "for his dauncing and valiantness," delighted in, more than any other, will not, on this occasion, oblige, any more than he would when requested to perform, before the envoys of Alençon, in 1578. He would rather be a "torch-bearer," and—like Mercutio, with "a visor for a visor,"—bear, though beneath a disguised personality, a revealing light. There follows one of the most noteworthy passages, in this intensely significant play.

ROM. A torch for me : [1] let wantons light of heart
Tickle the senseless rushes with their heels ;
For I am proverb'd with a grandsire phrase ;
I'll be a candle-holder, and look on.
The game was ne'er so fair, and I am done.

A more convincing clue to the speaker, Romeo's, identity than is hidden within these lines, could not possibly be found ; for, as Capt. Holland has pointed out, the words,

proverb'd with a grandsire phrase,
I'll be a candle-holder—

seem to be a direct reference to Oxford's grand-parents, the fifteenth Earl, and his countess, of whom the latter, named Elizabeth Trussell, had for her family crest a

[1] In most stage productions of the tragedy, Romeo is here carrying a torch.

"trussell," or rack for carrying candles, the design of which appears clearly upon her husband's arms. As I have remarked elsewhere in this book, it was customary, in Elizabethan days, to refer to people of rank, by their devices; and Oxford is here saying, in other words: "I will not dance to-night, but prefer to be, as my grandmother was, a candle-holder, or torch-bearer"—a speech that, incidentally, does, as it was intended to, throw light upon another dark subject, that of the concealed authorship of the plays, for the purpose of writing which Shakespeare has retired from court: so that the last line—

The game was ne'er so fair, and I am done—

introduces again the banishment motive, that, later on, is coming into the main story of a play, which, in common with so many others from the same hand, is symbolical, through and through.

By very similar methods, the inwardness of this drama continues to develop; for, excepting three lines in I, 5—

ROM. It seems she hangs upon the cheek of night
Like a rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear;
Beauty too rich for use, for earth too dear

which recall sonnet 38/27—

thy shadow to my sightless view,
Which like a jewel hung in ghastly night,
Makes black night beauteous and her old face new—

a passage written, moreover, in 1593, to Romeo and Juliet's own son, and set among other sonnets recalling this play, as also the hidden identity motive of Hamlet [1]—we can go straight to Capulet's orchard, and there come again upon this same concealment theme, handled in exactly similar fashion (II, 1):—

[1] For hidden identity motive sonnet 33/68; for "Hamlet," 43/74, and for "Romeo and Juliet," 41/28. Compare also R. & J., I, 5, Tybalt "fleering" at the Capulet's "solemnity," under cover of "an antic face," with Hamlet's mockery of Polonius, under cover of "an antic disposition."

*Enter Benvolio with Mercutio.*

BEN. Romeo! my cousin Romeo!
MER. He is wise;
And, on my life, hath stol'n him home to bed.
BEN. He ran this way, and leap'd this orchard wall:
Call, good Mercutio.
MER. Nay, I'll conjure too.
Romeo! humours! madman! passion! lover!
Appear thou in the likeness of a sigh:
Speak but one rhyme, and I am satisfied;
Cry but "ay me!" pronounce but "love" and "dove";
Speak to my gossip Venus one fair word,
One nick-name for her purblind son and heir,
Young Adam Cupid, he that shot so trim
When King Cophetua loved the beggar-maid!
He heareth not, he stirreth not, he moveth not;
The ape is dead, and I must conjure him.
I conjure thee by Rosaline's bright eyes,
By her high forehead and her scarlet lip,
By her fine foot, straight leg and quivering thigh,
And the demesnes that there adjacent lie,
That in thy likeness thou appear to us!
BEN. An if he hear thee, thou wilt anger him.
MER. This cannot anger him, 'twould anger him
To *raise a spirit in his mistress' circle*
Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
Till she had laid it and conjured it down;
That were some spite: my *invocation*
Is fair and honest, and in his mistress' name
I conjure only but to raise him up.
BEN. Come, he hath hid himself among these trees,
To be consorted with the humorous night:
Blind is his love, and best befits the dark.
MER. If love be blind, love cannot hit the mark.

Romeo, good night, I'll to my truckle-bed;
This field-bed is too cold for me to sleep.
Come, shall we go?
BEN. Go then, for 'tis in vain
To seek him here that means not to be found.

This fascinating passage teems with veiled allusions, of which the first is the now familiar one, of the author, Oxford-Romeo's concealed identity, accompanied by a clue to the identity of Rosaline with Queen Elizabeth, the substance of which is contained in the lines referring to Venus, Cupid, and Cophetua. Now I have already, in Chapter IV,[1] given reasons for supposing that Venus, of "Venus and Adonis," is, probably, Queen Elizabeth, in which case, if I have surmised correctly, the previous references to Rosaline, as having "Dian's wit," and this one, associating her with "young Adam Cupid," and also raising the theme of love—though not between an elderly queen and a young earl, but, by antithesis, between a king and a beggar-maid—all seem to fit in with my theory, as also with lines that are to open the next scene. It is interesting also, in this same connection, to read Mercutio's mysterious phrases, concerning the raising of a spirit

> in his mistress' circle
> Of some strange nature, letting it there stand
> Till she had laid it and conjured it down—

words which I interpret as bearing strongly upon this matter of the author's concealed identity, and suggesting, possibly, that, by Elizabeth's express wish, and even as an act of "some spite," Oxford's identity, in "his mistress's circle," was thus "conjured down." Such an interpretation would, in part, account for some of the many other obscure phrases alike in sonnets and plays hinting at a Shakesperean mystery in high places, such, for example, as that concerning "art made tongue-tied by authority," [2] from sonnet 45/66—a sonnet which, as I have already pointed out, contains, and is preceded by, many turns of thought and expression strongly reminiscent of "Hamlet," following close upon many

[1] See ante pp. 73–79.

[2] See ante p. 165. This all connects with the theory advanced in cap. VII that the Shakesperean plays were written under the auspices of a secret government committee.

others, that suggest "Romeo and Juliet"; including that one concerning the "jewel hung in ghastly night," which we have been comparing with the "rich jewel in an Ethiop's ear." Further, Mercutio's words concerning the "invocation" of a spirit, "in his mistress's circle," remind one strongly of an exactly parallel passage, in "As You Like It," II, 5, wherein, as I have already shewn,[1] Oxford-Jaques, after singing a ditty of his own invention, containing, three times repeated, the cryptic word "ducdame," roughly translatable as "leading lady," describes that utterance as "a Greek invocation to call fools into a circle" or courtiers into the court: whereupon there follows, immediately, another instance of this same, mysterious, ever recurring, disappearance, or silence, motive, that we are examining in Romeo—"I'll go sleep, if I can"—and, upon its heels (omitting the brief Orlando-Adam scene in II, 6)—a repetition of it, in another form, when the Duke, speaking of Jaques, exclaims :—

> I think he be transformed into a beast;
> For now here can I find him like a man.[2]

Here I must point out another remarkable set of parallels, still playing, I think, at bottom, upon the same idea of authorship, namely those between Romeo-Oxford's words, "I'll go sleep if I can," and Kent-Oxford's words, in "Lear," II, 2, spoken from the stocks :—

> Some time I shall sleep out, the rest I'll whistle—

in which connection it must be remembered that Kent's part, like Romeo's, is written largely in the concealed identity vein. From this there follows yet another strange trio of coincidences—the common introduction of a poetic-musical motive, such as rhyming, singing, or whistling. Banished Jaques, just before speaking his "conjuration" line, above quoted, has been extem-

[1] Ante p. 266.

[2] Probably an allusion to Oxford as the "boar" hid "in the forest."

porizing a song; banished Kent—a less cultured type of character—on being sent to the "stocks," will whistle; and the gallant young aristocrat, Romeo, who is "giving his friends the slip" (he will soon be actually banished) is begged, by Mercutio, to "speak but one rhyme," that will reveal his presence. None of these similarities, I submit, are due to chance; the whole of them, in my judgment, are deliberate hints connecting these three Oxford characters with the poetry and word-music of the plays.

Returning to "Romeo and Juliet" II, 1, we find Benvolio carrying on the concealment motive to the end of the scene, with—

'tis in vain
To seek him here that means not to be found.

The next scene, II, 2, continues, from its outset, similar stream of deeply significant topical allusions.

*Capulet's orchard. Enter Romeo.*

ROM. He jests at scars that never felt a wound.
(*Juliet appears above at a window.*)
But, soft! what light through yonder window breaks?
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,
Who is already sick and pale [1] with grief,
That thou her maid are far more fair than she.
Be not her maid, since she is envious;
Her vestal livery is but sick and green,
And none but fools do wear it; cast it off.

Now the reader who has followed me thus far, will have no difficulty in agreeing with Capt. Holland,[2] that the "envious moon," whose "vestal livery is sick (i.e. pale) and green," stands, almost beyond question, for the "vestal throned in the west," of "A Midsummer Night's Dream," whose Tudor livery was, in fact, green

[1] *Cf.* Mercutio, II, 4: "That same *pale* hard-hearted wench, that Rosaline."
[2] "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," p. 73.

and white; while the sun-maid, otherwise maid of honour to the moon-queen, is the other Elizabeth (Elizabeth Trentham), who was actually serving the English queen, in that capacity; and, as we know, was a very beautiful young woman; though no maid of honour needed to be more beautiful than Elizabeth, to arouse the queen's intense indignation by marrying. Oxford, then, is here bidding his young betrothed, in unmistakable terms, to leave the company of fools, who wear the royal livery—or, in Mercutio's phrase, the fools who have entered the "mistress's circle," or in Jaques' words "Ducdame's" circle—and to come live with *him*, instead; which the lady did, with the sequel already hinted at, in the chapter on the sonnets. "Can it be wondered at?" very pertinently asks Capt. Holland, "that Shakespeare preferred to have his plays appear under a pseudonym," and, in many instances, to have the printing of them postponed until some twenty years after his death?

Thus, throughout this loveliest love-scene that ever came, even from this dramatist's pen, runs, like a refrain, the echoing theme of the futility of mere names:—

> O, be some other name!
> What's in a name?
>
> Romeo doff thy name.
>
> I'll be new baptized;
> Henceforth I never will be Romeo.
>
> My name, dear saint, is hateful to myself—

throughout all of which the reader will now perceive, exactly, that underlying intention, to "baptize himself new," which we have seen already in those sonnets, wherein the same poet, after playing with the word, for verse after verse, concludes upon the assertion that his name is "Will."[1] Finally, as a last, lovely echo of the

[1] See ante pp. 195, 196.

same thought, in the same scene, we have Juliet, whispering from her balcony :—

> Bondage is hoarse, and may not speak aloud ;
> Else would I tear the cave where Echo lies,
> And make her airy tongue more hoarse than mine,
> With repetition of my Romeo's name.
> Romeo !

Thus does Echo sound from her cave, "Echo !"—a word beginning, and ending, upon the initial letters of Oxford's name ; and, should any reader be disposed to challenge the implication, I refer him to the Echo song, admittedly written by Oxford himself, signed with his name, and containing the line, "O hollow caves tell true"—a song, moreover, that, as I have shewn already, seems to be intimately concerned, in subject, with at least one other woman, Anne Vavasour, who came awhile into Oxford's life ;[1] contains the intensely significant and aptly fitting line—

> What wight first caught this heart and can from bondage it deli*ver* ? (Vere.)

The next speech, to which I must call attention, is the beautiful one, by Friar Laurence, opening II, 3, and containing the lines :—

> For nought so vile that on the earth doth live,
> But to the earth some special good doth give ;
> Nor aught so good, but, strain'd from that fair use,
> Revolts from true birth, stumbling on abuse—

all of which I take to be, in some measure, an expression of Oxford's remorse over early follies and extravagances ; when his youthful, reckless waywardness caused one to "revolt from true birth," and to "stumble on abuse" ; yet who, nevertheless, was the chosen instrument, by which, in fulness of time, there should be given to the

[1] For the connection of this song with "Hamlet," as well as with "Romeo and Juliet," see ante cap. II. Mr. Looney has pointed out that, as this poem was not published in Oxford's day, "Shakespeare" must have known it in MS.

earth a " good " so " special " as to make of the giver a hero, godlike, almost, in the affection of millions.

The fourth scene of the second act is also one of absorbing interest; wherein, after Mercutio has uttered his anathema, upon these fantastical Franco-Italianized young blades, of the Tybalt description, among whom Romeo himself, the " Mirror of Tuscany," must, unquestionably, be numbered [1]—the lover in person is seen approaching, whose entry Benvolio greets with :—

> Ben. Here comes Romeo, here comes Romeo.
> Mer. Without his roe, like a dried herring.

Now, as Capt. Holland has observed, " Romeo without ro " is, almost, EO ;—those " Echo " letters, once again, with which Oxford used to sign his early poems. Taking the three letters that remain, after eliminating " Ro," we get " ME.O," or—by adding a second E—" ME, E.O." In my Chapter V, of this book, discussing Chapman's secret comments upon Oxford—as actor, apparently, as well as author—I have already given another possible interpretation of this passage, as meaning that Oxford—who, as we know, did, occasionally, " play kingly parts in sport "—is, at that moment, actually coming upon that stage; in which case, the two lines last above quoted mean simply and literally, " Here comes, upon the stage, Edward Oxford, as actor." [2]

So far as the printed play is concerned, however, the identity of Edward Oxford is still concealed within the text; hence the significance of the lines that follow :—

> Mer. Signior Romeo: bon jour! there's a French salutation to your French slop.[3] You gave us the counterfeit fairly last night.
>
> Rom. Good morrow to you both. What counterfeit did I give you?

[1] Oxford, the " Speculum Tuscanismi " of Gabriel Harvey, was a strong partizan of the Italianized French court of the Medicis.
[2] See ante pp. 115–117.
[3] Harvey mentions Oxford's " French cambric ruffs."

MER. The slip, sir, the slip; can you not conceive?

ROM. Pardon, good Mercutio, my business was great; and in such a case as mine a man may strain courtesy.

MER. That's as much as to say, such a case as yours constrains a man to bow in the hams.

Here, once more, we have the concealment of identity motive; a young lover who has given his companions "the slip"; and a dramatist who has done the same for his audiences, and his readers; excusing himself upon the plea that his business is "great," which it certainly was, and his case peculiar, even to mystery. Further, if Capt. Holland be right—and I think that he is—a clue to Oxford's identity has here been inserted, in one of those excruciating puns, which, unquestionably, tickled the Elizabethan mind, though—my courage failing me, in this instance—I throw the whole responsibility, for what follows, upon the bold and ingenious author of "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses" (p. 74).

> Now if Mercutio wants to pun on "straining courtesy" and "constraining to curtsey," why drag in "bowing in the hams?" He could have made his pun perfectly well without it. But if we substitute Oxford and Elizabeth Trentham, for Romeo and Juliet, what do we find?
>
> Who was the cause of his straining courtesy? Elizabeth Trentham. If he was constrained to bow in the hands, he was constrained to incline his hams, or to an inclined ham. To trend is to incline, and so he constrained, or pressed, to a trent ham, which is precisely what the case was.

Capt. Holland, let me add, has an equally ingenious explanation of Mercutio's, "Here's a wit of cheveril that stretches from an inch narrow to an ell broad," which seekers can find in his book. The only hint I will drop here, is to point out that the second syllable of "cheveril" is "Ver," Oxford's family name.

From this point onwards, the Oxford allusions, in the tragedy, fade away; though we come, here and there, upon words that are reminiscent, as when Romeo's;—

My reputation stain'd
With Tybalt's slander—Tybalt that an hour
Hath been my kinsman—

reminds us of the slandering of Oxford, by his kinsmen, Howard and Arundel.[1]

Juliet's speech in the orchard (III, 2), beginning, "Gallop apace, you fiery-footed steeds," is close, in thought and expression, to those sonnets 38/41,[2] of which, indeed, I take the speech to be, in some sort, a development; one of the most striking parallels being that from sonnet 41 :—

When sparkling stars twire not thou gild'st the even—

comparable with Juliet's,

Take him and cut him out in little stars,
And he shall make the face of heaven so fine. . . .

Another speech of Juliet's, at the beginning of III, 2 —

O serpent heart, hid with a flowering face—

recalls vividly, in word and substance, the general theme of "Macbeth"; and Romeo's outburst (III, 3) :—

O, tell me, friar, tell me
In what vile part of this anatomy
Doth my name lodge? tell me, that I may sack
The hateful mansion—

reflects, exactly, Oxford's characteristically morbid sensibility, concerning his shamed and "wounded" name. The Friar's line, in the same scene :—

Since birth and heaven and earth, all three do meet
In thee at once—

is interesting, as a possible reference to Oxford's coat-of-arms, containing, as symbols of his birth, the heavenly star, or mullet, and the very earthly boar.[3] Further, the aubade (alba) between the lovers, at dawn, concerning the lark and the nightingale, suggests immediately

[1] *Cf.* the seeming references to Arundel in "As You Like It," ante pp. 264, 265.

[2] 27, 43, 61, 28 in the quarto order.

[3] See the chapter on the sonnets, ante pp. 186, 187.

Oxford's poem "Desire," which opens upon the same theme;[1] while the reference, in IV, 3, to the vault,

> Where for this many hundred years the bones
> Of all my buried ancestors are pack'd—

seems to picture the tombs of Oxford's predecessors in the Earldom, still mouldering in the ancient priory at Earl's Colne, which was the burial-place of the family of de Vere.[2] It is quite characteristic of Shakespeare's method, in fashioning these plays, and his astonishing capacity for aloofness from his own lines, that the Nurse's lamentations over the supposed death of Juliet:—

> O day! O day! O day! O hateful day!—

and Peter's rhymes concerning "griping grief," and "doleful dumps," remind us, irresistibly, of Pyramus, with his,

> O night, O night, alack, alack, alack,

and his jingle of "dreadful dole" (*M.N.D.*, V, 1).

Romeo's last speech, in V, 3, seems to me largely symbolic; for when he describes the grave of Paris as a "lantern"; his own last words as a "lightning," and the vault, wherein Juliet lies, as "a feasting presence full of light," he is, I believe, consciously symbolizing the illumination that his plays shall throw upon himself, his work, and his cause. In "As You Like It," Touchstone, speaking as, and for, the author of the plays, alludes to them, in the person of Audrey, as his "wife"; so also, here, Romeo apostrophizes his lady, who, though "dead," yet lives:—

> O my love! my wife!
> Death, that hath suck'd the honey of thy breath,
> Hath had no power yet upon thy beauty:
> Thou art not conquered; beauty's ensign yet
> Is crimson in thy lips and in thy cheeks,
> And death's pale flag is not advanced there.

[1] Looney's edition of Oxford's poems, p. 7.
[2] Chapter on the sonnets, ante pp. 182–185.

Here, as I read him, Shakespeare repeats, in his play, the idea that he reiterates, again and again, in the sonnets ;—

Thou still shalt live, such virtue hath my pen,
Where breath most breathes, even in the mouths of men :

and, possibly, the line—

And death's pale flag is not advanced there—

may be intended as a hint, that the flag which the Shakesperean plays, in death's despite, were written to "advance," was the flag of England, the well being, and glory, of which, as we have seen in an earlier chapter, was, almost certainly, one of the motives that brought them into being. In the ensuing words :—

I still will stay with thee
And never from this palace of dim night
Depart again—

I read Oxford's willingness to be judged, by posterity, not upon his earthly career, as seen by the world without, but as the author, "dead," and secret, of "Romeo and Juliet," and the rest of the wonders in which his name shall live.

Finally, some ambiguity of meaning may, I think, be read into the Prince's lines :—

Seal up the mouth of outrage for a while,
Till we can clear these ambiguities,
And know their spring, their head, their true descent :—

for it is my hope that, before the reader has reached the end of this book, he may hold that some of its pages have helped him to perceive, more clearly than before, the "spring and head" of a few of the many difficulties with which the sonnets, and the plays, alike, have, hitherto, been beset ; and to follow sympathetically, and imaginatively too, their "true descent," to the conclusions which have been gradually emerging.

I have already noted the fact, that the last two letters, of the last word of the play, are "E O" ; and that the word itself, ROMEO, if I have argued rightly herein,

may be read as a secret signature to this so intimately personal tragedy.

In view of that so outspoken intimacy, and of the thinly veiled attacks the tragedy makes upon the queen herself, I am much surprised that it appeared in print before the Folio of 1623. The fact, however, is that a quarto edition was published, although anonymously, in 1597, and another in 1599. A third quarto, still anonymous, appeared in 1609, when, as we have seen, the Countess was leaving Brooke House, five years after her husband's death, at a time contemporaneous with the second period of Shakesperean publication, which included the sonnets, "Troilus," and "King Lear." Only in certain copies of a reprint of the third quarto did the name of the author appear, for the first time, upon the title-page—"Written by W. Shake-speare"—the name being both hyphenated and italicized! The text of that First Folio version was mainly taken from the third quarto; and it is possible that the early versions, published during Oxford's lifetime, were unauthorized by him, and contrary to his will and intention; though I think it more probable that Elizabeth's age, and increasing infirmities, added to the heavy cares of state, during those late 'nineties, may, in Oxford's judgment, have rendered sufficiently safe a proceeding that, ten years before, would have been extremely imprudent, and even dangerous.

## "OTHELLO"

With the four remaining plays that will concern us, at any length, in this volume—"Othello," "Hamlet," "Lear," and "Macbeth"—we shall see Shakespeare, not merely at the height of his powers, as poet and dramatist, in the more conventional senses of those words, but also as a quasi-political symbolist, peopling his dramas, as nature, occasionally, here or there, peoples the world, with beings larger than life; and filling the canvas of his stage-pictures with subjects of international, and of epical, import, which, added to the splendour and magnificence of their diction, lift these titanic tragedies to a height of exalted isolation among the products of the human mind.

This method, towards which he is tentatively feeling his way, in such tragi-comedies as "The Merchant of Venice," and "Twelfth Night," he will further develop in the great tragedies, built up, without exception, around contemporary historical themes, in which Oxford himself, as a deep lover of his own country, as also of France and Italy, was profoundly interested and concerned.[1] These tragedies, nevertheless—and herein lies half the secret of their poignancy—are pervaded, through and through, with their author's own personality and fate; and are fused in the fires of his burning imagination. "Hamlet," the most human play of them all, though built upon a basis of saga-born nature myth, is, like Romeo, pure Oxford; "Othello," "Lear," and "Macbeth" are symbolic-historical figures, shaped after notorious, or celebrated, people of their time; yet imbued, in each instance, with much of the personal character, and something of the individual experience of their author.

Concerning the main theme of "Othello," historically

[1] It is significant that, though an early play, such as "Love's Labour's Lost," names openly the historic characters; e.g. Princess of France and Biron, the later plays treat of the same Medici-Valois group under fictitious names.

and symbolically considered, there can, I think, be no possible doubt; Miss Winstanley, in her "Othello as the Tragedy of Italy," having made it abundantly clear that the Moor stands, sometimes for Philip II of Spain, and, at others, for the power of Spain, with Desdemona personifying Venice: the drama's central theme, historically considered, being the treaty of alliance between Venice and Spain, in 1571; an event occasioned by the loss of Cyprus to the Turks, followed by an appeal from Venice, to the Christian powers, for assistance in regaining the lost island. Spain (Othello) answered that call, by marrying Venice (Desdemona); it being quite usual, in Elizabethan times, to consider, and to write of, such treaties, as symbolic marriages.[1] The Spanish bridegroom, in this instance, is portrayed as a black man, because, owing to Spain's long occupation by the Moors, it was customary for other European writers to regard the Spaniards as black.[2]

The result of this Venetian-Spanish alliance was the Battle of Lepanto, in 1571; when the Turkish fleet was destroyed, and the Island of Cyprus won back for the Venetians, by the combined navies, commanded by Don John of Austria, whose name we have already seen made use of—and, moreover, as representing, in part, Oxford himself—when considering the comedy, "Much Ado About Nothing."[3] This Don John, it should be further noticed, seems to supply material for the part of Cassio; since Philip's (Othello's) servant or minister, Antonio Perez, the Iago of the tragedy, has relations with Cassio, that resemble, very closely indeed, those of Perez to Don John of Austria, as Miss Winstanley easily shews.

> Perez did profess to be a generous friend to Don John of Austria; he did urge him on to various imprudences, and intoxicate him with the idea of power; he did betray

[1] We have seen Oxford identifying the plays as wives of the characters that stand for himself.

[2] Miss Winstanley's "Othello," p. 44.

[3] See ante p. 283. For Don John see Ward's "Oxford," p. 162.

him to Philip; he did succeed in making Philip frenziedly jealous of him; Philip certainly disgraced his half brother and dismissed him from favour; and, as nearly all Europe believed, either murdered him or, at least, attempted his murder.[1]

On the more purely historical, as also upon the more symbolic side, the analogies equally hold; for Philip II of Spain, who was generally regarded, by his own people, as well as by other nations, as an incarnation, almost, of Spain's national genius,[2] did actually murder his wife, Elizabeth of Valois, in 1568; not by stifling her, as in the play, but by compelling her to take poison; the method which Othello himself first suggests, in IV, 1—

> Get me some poison, Iago; this night. I'll not expostulate with her—

though actually the wretched woman had to be "expostulated" with, very severely, before she would consent to die, at her lord's behest.[3] Further, it will be remembered that one of the causes of Desdemona's undoing, in the play, is a handkerchief, about which the tragedy's intrigue develops. So also it is here; for the story of the murder, as told by Antonio Perez (Iago) himself, runs as follows:—

> A certain Marquis del Pozzo, who made love to one of the Queen's ladies, was permitted by her to have ingress to the royal apartments and to visit them by night; the King was informed, and a watch was set and the Marquis seen leaving; as ill-fortune decreed, the Queen happened to drop her handkerchief, and the same gentleman picked it up. This caused the King's suspicion to become concentrated on the person of the Queen; he gave directions for a murderous midnight attack to be made on the gentleman, and ordered one of the Queen's attendants to give her poison.

[1] Winstanley's "Othello," pp. 115, 116.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 32.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 96. "Laquelle (the queen) résista longtems et par raison et par refus tout à fait."

Here let me remind the reader of another very interesting fact, wholly pertinent to our theme, namely that this unhappy prototype of Desdemona, Elizabeth de Valois, is a daughter of Catherine de Medicis; and another member, therefore, of the Franco-Florentine family, several of whom we have already seen brought, by Shakespeare, into the plays, "Love's Labour's Lost," and "Twelfth Night"; and shall see coming, with still greater prominence, into "King Lear" and "Macbeth."

Again, this Antonio Perez, whom Miss Winstanley shews, beyond question, to be the historic original of Iago—the name, be it added, of a Spanish national saint![1]—came to England, as recorded in the Venetian state-papers, during March, 1604,[2] very close to the time at which "Othello" must have been finished; and very probably, met Oxford personally; or, at any rate, would have been well known to him by repute, since the narratives of Perez were familiar to the whole Essex group; the man himself having been a protégé of Essex, employed by that faction, as also by Henry of Navarre, for important political intrigues against the Spaniard's own country.[3] Du Prat wrote:—

> Il (Perez) animait les Provinces-Unies à la révolte contre l'Espagne; il était l'âme des traités qui allaient lier la France et l'Angleterre contre cette dangereuse et redoubtable puissance.

Historically, then, Perez-Iago was precisely the villainous traitor that Shakespeare makes him out to be.

As for the other characters, Bianca seems to be a personification of the national party in Italy, known as the "Bianchi," or "Whites," with whom Don John of Austria frittered away his great designs[4]; Don John,

[1] This I take to be a touch of Shakesperean irony.

[2] Oxford lived until June 24, 1604.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 98. Iago, in III, 2, says, "I learned it (i.e. drinking) in England." Shakespeare meant us to know that the man had been there.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

as we have seen, being the prototype of Cassio, of whom Perez-Iago makes Philip-Othello bitterly jealous, both in the tragedy, and in actual history as well.[1]

Emilia, almost certainly, was the Princess Eboli—note the resemblance of the names—who had been the mistress of Perez, and was placed, by Philip, as a kind of spy, in some close relationship to his wife, Elizabeth (Desdemona). When Perez and the king fell out—probably because of jealousy over this woman—Philip caused the princess to be slowly stifled to death, in her dungeon—a motive that Shakespeare seems to have transferred to the death of Desdemona.[2]

Now all these parallels, as Miss Winstanley argues them, are, I hold, almost unanswerable. There can, in my judgment, be very little doubt that Shakespeare, when writing his tragedy—while taking its skeleton from Cinthio's novel, of which a French translation appeared in 1584—obtained his real material directly from his own knowledge of contemporary European history—and of historical mythology, which, in the manner of the day, had gathered about, and around it—symbolizing Spain and Venice, as a fair woman wooed by a Moor. Miss Winstanley holds that Tassoni's "Philippics,"—a series of anti-Spanish pamphlets, comprising an impassioned plea to the princes of Italy to unite, on behalf of Venice against Spain, and dating, it seems, between 1600 and 1620—were based, in part, upon Shakespeare's play.[3] There can be no reasonable doubt that Tassoni's story, of the wooing of a Venetian lady, by a Moorish soldier-of-adventure, together with their characters, as depicted by him, and the psychology of their union, corresponds, very closely, with Shakespeare's story of Othello and Desdemona. Quite certainly the English and Italian authors drew upon a common historical and mythological source; but, seeing, as we have, that most of the Shakesperean plays were probably written at an earlier date than is generally

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 113. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 104. [3] *Ibid.*, p. 143.

ascribed to them, I should not be surprised to know—could it ever be known—that Oxford possessed some of Tassoni's Philippics in MS., very soon after 1600, and used them for his play; instead of vice-versa, as Miss Winstanley, lacking the Oxford clue, believes to be the case.

"Othello," however, has certainly a second historical basis: for in all his great tragedies, as I shall show, Shakespeare, partly for his drama's sake, and partly, no doubt, for purposes of concealment, interweaves at least two historical themes—the second theme, in the case of "Othello," being the historic relations between England and Spain; particularly, as Capt. Holland has observed,[1] the British campaign in Flanders, in 1585–86, when we allied ourselves with the Dutch, against a common, and mighty, Catholic foe. The incident in "Othello" III, 3, when Iago and Roderigo, for the purpose of forcing a quarrel upon Cassio, make him drunk, reappears exactly, with Edward Norris for Cassio, in Motley's "United Netherlands."[2] Now this Edward Norris was the brother of Sir John Norris, who, with the Earl of Oxford, was in Flanders for the campaign, in the first days of September, 1585. Oxford was somewhat mysteriously recalled, in October of the same year; an incident that, almost certainly, is twice referred to in "Othello"—for the first time in IV, 1, when Othello is moved by a letter received from the Senators of Venice—

> DES. What, is he angry?
> LODO. May be the letter moved him;
> For, as I think, they do command him home,
> Deputing Cassio in his government.

In the next scene of the play (IV, 2) occurs the following significant passage—

> OTH. O Desdemona! Away! away! away!
> DES. Alas the heavy day! Why do you weep?

[1] "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," pp. 64-66.
[2] Vol. II, pp. 92, *et seq.*

Am I the motive of these tears, my lord ?
If haply you my father did suspect
An instrument of this your calling back,
Lay not your blame on me.

Here are some very remarkable parallels, not merely with the recall of 1586, but with that of 1576 also,[1] when Oxford was summoned suddenly back from Europe, just when he was about to visit the East (Cyprus), the very island with which this play is concerned: Othello being recalled, correspondingly, from Cyprus to Venice, the city that, in 1576, Oxford had recently been visiting. But the correspondences go deeper yet. Desdemona hints that Othello suspects her father, Brabantio, of being behind this unwelcome recall. Now if we regard Desdemona as standing for Oxford's first wife, Anne Cecil, then Brabantio becomes Burleigh, Oxford's father-in-law, the statesman to whom, in June 25, 1585, Oxford had written, begging for a command, and who had accordingly offered him one, in the horse, by a letter which fell into the hands of the Spaniards.[2] Now Brabantio, be it remembered, was as powerful a person in Venice, as Burleigh was in London :—

In his effect a voice potential
As double as the Duke's :—

and when, further, we remember that Iago, in these very scenes (IV, 1), uses, of Othello, the words, "He is that he is," recalling, at once, Oxford's own words to Burleigh, "I am that I am," [3] and that Iago, in I, 1, says of himself, "I am not what I am," the obvious inference seems to be unescapable. Othello, moreover, is care-

[1] Mr. Looney in "Shakespeare Identified," pp. 272-275, notes the recall of 1576.

[2] Ward's "Oxford," pp. 252-254.

[3] See ante p. 188. This iterated phrase may connect up with the implied criticism of Burleigh under the name "Corambis"—early form of Polonius—probably a twisting of Burleigh's motto, "Cor una," the inference in each instance being that Burleigh was double-hearted.

ful to inform us that, like Oxford, he is of noble birth (I, 2) :—

> I fetch my life and being
> From men of royal seige, and my demerits
> May speak unbonnetted to as proud a fortune
> As this that I have reach'd—

and when we put beside all these resemblances the fact, that, just as Othello, by guile and trickery, was being estranged from Desdemona, so also Oxford, for years after 1576, was estranged, by slanderous tongues, from Anne Cecil, his countess—is it possible, any longer, honestly to deny that, in Othello, we have, once again, beneath the Moorish disguise, Oxford deeply remorseful over the past, and seeking to atone, in part, by a confession, in which he dramatizes, with heart-rending poignancy, his ill-behaviours towards an innocent wife, slandered as himself also had been ?

There are more topical allusions yet ; for, immediately upon Oxford's recall from Flanders, Queen Elizabeth appointed the Earl of Leicester to the supreme command in the Low Countries—an incident that seems also to appear in the play (I, 3).

> DUKE. 'Tis certain then for Cyprus .
> Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town ?
> FIRST SEN. He's now in Florence.
> DUKE. Write from us to him; post-post-haste dispatch—

lines wherein the quaint name, Luccicos, is probably, a clumsy attempt to Italianize the name of Leicester. As for the account of the Turkish fleet "bearing up to Cyprus," in I, 3, and the "banging" of that fleet, by "a desperate tempest" (II, 1), we have here, almost certainly, a double reference—first to the Battle of Lepanto, in 1571, at which the combined navies of Venice and Spain effected the deliverance of Cyprus, by the destruction of the Turkish fleet ; and, secondly, as

Capt. Holland reminds us,[1] to the destruction of the Spanish Armada, in part by tempest, in 1588—an engagement in which Oxford had command of a vessel, and was offered command of the naval base, Harwich.[2] That great victory was followed by the celebration, at St. Paul's, on November 24, 1588, at which Oxford, as Lord Great Chamberlain, was one of the two bearers of the canopy, as he openly tells his readers, in sonnet 92/125 :—[3]

Were't aught to me I bore the canopy.

[1] "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," pp. 62, 63.
[2] Ward's "Oxford," pp. 291-295. [3] See ante pp. 176–178.

## "HAMLET"

The years 1586–89, of which we have been writing, were a period of great anxiety to all patriotic Englishmen, when the Queen's life was in constant danger from ever-recurring Roman Catholic plots; and our very national existence was imperilled by the might of Spain. In October, 1586, one of the years with which we have seen the play, "Othello," to be concerned, took place the trial, and condemnation, of Mary Queen of Scots, with Oxford sitting as one of the Commissioners. On February 8, 1587, the Queen was executed, just about the time that strenuous preparations were being made toward coping with, and destroying, the Spanish Armada, as described by Marcellus, in the opening scene of "Hamlet":—

> Tell me, he that knows,
> Why this same strict and most observant watch
> So nightly toils the subject of the land,
> And why such daily cast of brazen cannon,
> And foreign mart for implements of war;
> Why such impress of shipwrights, whose sore task
> Does not divide the Sunday from the week;
> What might be toward, that this sweaty haste
> Doth make the night joint-labourer with the day.
> Who is't that can inform me?

We can very well inform Marcellus. It was fear of the great Roman Catholic power, for which, among others, stood Mary Queen of Scots; and Mary, as we shall see later, is, in part, one of the prominent characters of "Hamlet," the motives and themes of which are no less mixed than are those of "Othello."

That Hamlet, fundamentally considered, stands for winter, as a personified nature-myth, I shewed in my last book; and in the following chapter of that same volume I argued, what some readers of these pages may already have surmised, that Hamlet, in Shakespeare's play, is

none other than Oxford himself, in close relationship with the Queen's principal minister, Burleigh, and with his daughter, Anne Cecil, whom he married in 1571, some eight months after the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, which gave us the key-date for the theme of "Twelfth Night."

The identification of Oxford with Hamlet, seems to me to be no less clear than his corresponding identification with Bertram, in "All's Well," that we have already examined; and I will not restate the evidence; though, since certain critics have been unintelligently derisive, concerning both identifications, I will add, as regards Burleigh, this item of evidence, which alone is a very strong one. Burleigh's motto, as Capt. Holland has reminded us, was "Cor Unum, Via Una," or "One Heart, One Way." Now the name given to Polonius, in the First Quarto, as also in "Fratricide Punished," is "Corambis," or "Cor Ambis." The name Corambis, therefore, is an attack on Burleigh, Oxford having twisted the Latin "Cor Unum," or "Single Heart," into the latinized "Cor Ambis" or "Double Heart," thus hinting directly at the guile and craft that are so apparent behind the superficial jocularity of Polonius. Further, when Oxford writes to Burleigh, and in sonnet 107/121, the words, "I am that I am,"[1] beside other unmistakable references to Burleigh and Anne (Ophelia), the Earl, in my opinion, is again emphasizing his own singleness of mind—cor unum—as against Burleigh's inveterate duplicities. I have already shewn, in writing of "Othello," that the several analogies between Brabantio-Burleigh, and Othello-Oxford, further support the correctness of both parallels. Finally, if "Corambis" was not aimed at Burleigh, and is devoid of political significance, why was the name changed in later editions of the play?

Capt. Holland, in his "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses,"[2] has called attention to several interesting

[1] See ante p. 188. [2] pp. 44-49.

Oxfordian and topical allusions in "Hamlet," of which the most important is in V, 1—

HAM. How long hast thou been a grave-maker?

FIRST CLOWN. Of all the days i' the year, I came to't the day that our last King Hamlet o'ercame Fortinbras.

HAM. How long is that since?

FIRST CLO. Cannot you tell that? every fool can tell that: it was that very day that young Hamlet was born; he that is mad, and sent into England.

HAM. Ay, marry, why was he sent into England? . . . upon what ground?

FIRST CLO. Why, here in Denmark. I have been sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.

Now these are very significant words, because if, as Capt. Holland surmises, we may, for Denmark and Norway, read England and Scotland—and that Scotland was in Shakespeare's mind, when he wrote "Hamlet," I shall bring proofs, in a moment—the gravedigger's words mean, that he has been practising his vocation since 1550, the year in which, during the reign of "our last king," Edward VI, peace was declared between the two countries, on April 1st; and as the clown further tells us, that he has been "sexton here, man and boy, thirty years," the date at which he is is speaking is 1580, when Oxford-Hamlet, born on April 12, 1550, was thirty years old. The year 1580, therefore, may be taken as a key-date for the play; though other allusions tend to bring the year forward, a little, into the fifteen-'eighties; since the clown's reference to the skull of Yorick, the King's jester, as having "lain in the earth three-and-twenty years," points, almost certainly, to Will Somers, jester to King Henry VIII, who died in 1560, thus giving us, not 1580, but 1583, as the year in which the clown is speaking. Other considerations confirm that year; as, for example, Marcellus' words, already quoted, concerning the "impress of ship-wrights," etc.; a probable allusion to the Royal Commission of 1583, to report on the state of the navy, in

view of the threatened Spanish invasion, which actually came in 1588. All these many discrepancies in "Hamlet," including the references to the Prince, as a young and attractive man, at the opening of the play, and as a comparatively old one, at its end, are, at once, accounted for, when it is perceived that the play is an autobiographical *pastiche* of incidents that range over Oxford's whole life, from 1567 to the turn of the century; whereas the orthodox commentators can offer no solution, except careless nonchalance, of these, nevertheless, perfectly simple anomalies.

It was in July, 1582, that Oxford's brother-in-law, Peregrine Bertie, Lord Willoughby de Eresby, was sent to Elsinore, by the Queen, for the purpose of conferring the Order of the Garter on the Danish King, Frederic II; a mission concerning which Lord Willoughby wrote a "Relation," in his own hand (August, 1582) containing the following very significant words :—

> This being done we royally feasted, and the King (? had) all the ordnance of the Castle given us. And we, demanding again the oath and protestation to be answerable to that favour and honour he had received from Her Majesty, he promised this instrument (i.e. document) which we have delivered, accompanied with many affectionate and loving speeches to Her Majesty and all of the Order. All of which performed after a whole volley of all the great shot of the Castle discharged, a royal feast, and a most artificial and cunning fireworks.[1]

All this, including even the reiterated demand for loyalty to the Queen :—

> Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet—

and the references to "loving speeches to Her Majesty," the "royal feast," and the "volley of all the great shot of the castle," reappears, versified, yet almost verbatim, in Shakespeare's lines :—

> HAM. I shall in all my best obey you, madam.

[1] Ward's "Oxford," pp. 234-235.

KING. Why, 'tis a loving and a fair reply.
Be as ourself in Denmark. Madam come;
This gentle and unforced accord of Hamlet
Sits smiling to my heart; in grace whereof,
No jocund health that Denmark drinks to-day,
But the great cannon to the clouds shall tell,
And the king's rouse the heaven shall bruit again,
Re-speaking earthly thunder.

Even the "draughts of Rhenish" referred to by Hamlet, in I, 4:—

And as he drains his draughts of Rhenish down,
The kettle-drum and trumpet thus bray out
The triumph of his pledge—

are recorded also in authentic history; for, during the second mission to the King of Denmark, in 1585, T. Tennecker, writing, from Elsinore, to Sir. F. Walsingham, says:—

> The King was . . . minded to entertain the English ambassadors, "with him all the winter" with "no lack of Rhenish wine."[1]

Another very ingenious point, made by Capt. Holland, is, that at the close of this same first act of the play, in which we have noted already so many topical allusions, Hamlet refers bitterly to the time, as being "out of joint"—a probable reference to the change, on the Continent, from the Julian to the Gregorian Calendar, with ten days of difference between the old style and the new.[2] The first scene of Act II is also worth the reader's attention, as providing striking evidence—not, I think, noted before—of Polonius' cunning duplicity, to which, as we have seen, the name Corambis probably alludes. The duologue with Reynaldo, in my judgment, is introduced partly for that purpose; and the reference to "falling out at tennis" may be a reminder of the much discussed tennis-court quarrel, of 1579, between Oxford

[1] State Papers Office, Denmark, Vol. I, quoted Col. B. R. Ward, *Hackney Spectator*, January 19, 1923.
[2] "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," p. 47.

and Sidney, upon which Capt. Holland comments very pertinently :—

> When Sir Philip Sidney challenged the Earl, and the Queen forbade the duel, the reason she gave to Sir Philip was as follows : " She pointed out the difference in degrees between earls and gentlemen, the respect inferiors owed to their superiors, and how the gentleman's neglect of the nobility taught the peasant to insult both." This occurred rather more than three years before " Hamlet" was written. Now mark Hamlet's remark, in V, 1.
>
> By the Lord, Horatio, this three years I have taken note of it; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier that he galls his kibe.
>
> Hamlet actually makes use of the same word peasant—as the Queen used, and mentions the time that has elapsed —three years—since the incident occurred.

Here, then, I must leave the side of the Hamlet theme that represents the Prince of Denmark as a young courtier at Whitehall, with Burleigh for father-in-law, and pass on to the second, and scarcely less interesting, motive of the play. When first it began to dawn upon me that all the Shakesperean dramas—comedies and tragedies alike—were, more or less, topical in motive, I was surprised by my inability to decide even conjecturally who were the historic originals of King Claudius and Queen Gertrude ; since it was idle to suppose that the last-named could anywise be fitted to Queen Elizabeth, at whom a straightforward development of the Oxford-Burleigh clues directly pointed. I had not, at that time, fully comprehended Shakespeare's trick, of dividing his theme between two European courts ; and it was not until I turned to Miss Winstanley's valuable book, " Hamlet and the Scottish Succession," that I got to the bottom of the matter, and understood that Shakespeare, unable to find, at the English court, matter for the murder-and-revenge motive, which, following

Saxo and Belleforest, he contemplated inserting into his play, had gone, instead, to Edinburgh, and, using also some details from the earlier murder of Rizzio, in 1566, had worked in the assassination of Darnley, by Bothwell, in 1567, a deed connived at, if not actually instigated, by the very woman at whose trial we have seen Oxford officially present in 1586—i.e. Mary, Queen of Scots—who herself was one of that dark-souled family, the Guises, another member of which will come into "King Lear." This is the tribe with which Chapman so much interested himself, in those "Bussy" plays, that are stuffed with allusions to, and comments upon, "Hamlet," and other Shakesperean dramas. Mary, moreover, was connected, by marriage, with the Florentine Medicis, in whom we have seen Oxford, as a lover of Tuscany, to be deeply interested.

From that moment, thanks to Miss Winstanley, I could see the play whole, as one in which the personal experiences of Oxford, in London, were linked with those of the Scottish Queen, and her lover, at Edinburgh; and I was then able, not only to confirm Miss Winstanley's theories, when, in my judgment, they were right—as, in the Scottish matter, they mainly were—but to correct them, when they were wrong, which, in the case of Hamlet's original, Miss Winstanley, through not possessing the Oxford clue, necessarily must be, to some extent; even though she had thoroughly realized that Polonius was a caricature of Burleigh, which should have given her the Oxford cue. The authoress argues, with ability, that the Prince of Denmark is, historically, James I of England, the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, with something of the later Essex super-added; and since the great Shakesperean characters are, admittedly, composite, I do not, for an instant, suggest that Shakespeare did not insert, into his Hamlet, touches of character taken from the Scottish King,[1] and from Essex, the last

[1] Since writing the above, an examination of the plan of the Darnley Murder, in the Museum of the Record Office, supports

named of whom certainly resembled Oxford in several ways. My main thesis, however, that Oxford is Hamlet, is confirmed by the fact that Anne Cecil, and Anne Vavasour,[1] slip so naturally into the picture, as the originals of Ophelia, whom Miss Winstanley is compelled to seek where best she may, and finds her, not very plausibly, in Elizabeth Vernon, who became Countess of Essex.

Concerning the connection of Hamlet with the Darnley murder, however, Miss Winstanley makes out an indisputable case, for the full exposition of which I refer my readers to her book, though I must find room for a brief summary here.

In the saga source of "Hamlet," the murder is not told by the ghost; but that device has a parallel in the Darnley murder; since there was published in Edinburgh, in 1567, a ballad in which the ghost of the murdered king does return lamenting. Further it will be remembered how the ghost tells Hamlet that the deed was done while the victim was "sleeping within mine orchard"; and, as we know from Burton, and others, not only was it generally believed that an attempt had been made to poison Darnley; but it seems also that he, while endeavouring to escape, "got over a wall into a garden," and was there strangled. Buchanan, in the Scottish version of his "Detection" (1572), tells how, shortly before the murder, "certain black pimples" came out upon Darnley's body; and Shakespeare, who certainly could have had access to that book, makes his uncle's ghost speak of a "loathsome crust," that, after the poisoning, covered "all my smooth body" (*Ham.*, I, 5). Buchanan also lays great stress upon the secrecy of the murder; and it is remarkable that Mary had already been accused of conniving at the death of her

Miss Winstanley; since the picture of the young King, in bed, close to the orchard, and appealing to God "to avenge his cause," at once suggests the Ghost's words in "Hamlet"—"sleeping in mine orchard."

[1] See "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 71–78.

first husband, Francis II, of France, who, as rumour said, was slain by poison "inserted in the ear." [1]

The parallels between Buchanan's "Detection" of the murder, the appended "Oration," and the "Hamlet" play continue to be most remarkable. Here are a few :—

| SHAKESPEARE. | BUCHANAN. |
|---|---|
| Married with my uncle, My father's brother, but no more like my father Than I to Hercules. . . (*Ham.*, I, 2.) | That adulterous partner, neither in birth nor in beauty nor in any honest quality was in any wise comparable with her disdained husband. |
| O most wicked speed to post, With such dexterity to incestuous sheets. (*Ham.* I, 2.) | One is divorced, another is coupled, and that in such posting speed . . . |
| A little month, or ere those shoes were old With which she follow'd my poor father's body. . . (*Ham.*, I, 2.) | When of the forty days appointed for the mourning, scarce twelve were yet fully past . . . she cometh to her own bias. |
| HOR. I saw him once; he was a goodly king. HAM. He was a man, take him for all in all, I shall not look upon his like again. (*Ham.*, I, 2.) | She (Mary) long beheld . . . the goodliest corpse of any gentleman that ever lived in this age (i.e. Darnley). |

This, and many other parallels, that one could quote, make it quite certain, in my judgment, that Shakespeare, when he wrote "Hamlet," had the full facts of the Darnley murder, and, quite possibly, the text of Buchanan, before him. An idea so peculiarly individual, even, as the "old mole," that "fellow in the cellarage," calling to the oath-takers above, seems to be topical; for Miss Winstanley, by quotations from several writers, brings forward [2] proofs of a definite belief, in Shakespeare's age, that "the oath ensuing the murder of Darnley had been taken in the vaults of Holyrood over the grave of Rizzio, and that this was punctually and to the time fulfilled."

We see, then, that the tragedy, "Hamlet," is built up around two themes—primarily certain autobiographical

[1] Miss Winstanley's "Hamlet and the Scottish Succession," p. 55.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 67, 68.

experiences of Oxford, especially in regard to his relations with Burleigh and Anne Cecil, which, to some extent, he had already made use of in " All's Well " and " Measure for Measure " ; and secondly—following the old saga story, whence sprang the "Hamlet" drama of revenge—he invokes the murder theme, that, when a lad of seventeen, he had heard talked of, both at Whitehall, and at his father-in-law's house in the Strand. Pondering over the details of that crime, as he had read them, in Buchanan and elsewhere, and over other incidents in the unhappy queen's career, that had come vividly to his knowledge, when he sat, with other Commissioners, upon her trial, he began to realize that, behind the grim tragedy of lust, that he had developed in "Hamlet," there lay, dramatically unexploited as yet, a theme more poignant still—Bothwell's personal tragedy of insensate ambition ; and that of the woman who urged him on to his doom. Upon this idea he seized ; mingled it with regretful reminiscences of his own youthful hopes, great and unfulfilled ; and, heating all white-hot in the fires of his triumphant imagination, wrote the hapless tragedy of " Macbeth."

## CHAPTER XI

### OXFORD IN THE TRAGEDIES—*Continued*

"Macbeth"—"King Lear."

### "MACBETH"

In writing "Macbeth," which must have been one of his last plays, and may have been left unfinished at the time of his death, Oxford adopted methods similar to those that he had used in "Hamlet"; to which, indeed, "Macbeth" is, in some respects, a companion play. He went, for the historic outline of his story, not to any age-long saga, but to Holinshed's Chronicle, borrowing incidents from the story of Macbeth, and interweaving therewith—though far removed from its correct place in history—the murder of Duff, by Donwald, a theme the dramatic possibilities of which had been suggested to him, as I think, not only by "Hamlet," but also by the success of Kyd's "Arden of Feversham," a work that had revealed the stage possibilities of a great marital tragedy, lifted from the domestic to the royal sphere.[1]

Shakespeare's adoption of such a theme was natural enough, in a play that must have been written almost coincidentally with the accession of James I, in 1603; when already the dramatist's mature genius, now grown mainly tragical in its bent, was turning willingly towards exalted historical themes, of a deeply national, and

[1] Shakespeare rarely used a dramatic theme, the effect of which had not already been proved upon the stage. In cap. II of my "Shakespeare, Jonson and Wilkins as Borrowers," I showed the analogies between "Arden of Feversham," and "Macbeth," and that Shakespeare had probably used lines from "Arden" in "Hamlet."

quasi-symbolical, or mythological type, in which the principal characters, almost without exception, will be larger and grander or more terrible than life. Scottish history, at that time, could abundantly feed such a mood; for Scotland's king—now, also, King of England—was linked, by birth, with that same fantastically sinister Florentine Medici-Valois group, in whom we have already seen Oxford taking so passionate an interest; and, moreover, the new monarch of the now united countries, earnestly believed himself to be the man of destiny, who should fulfil, in his own person, the age-long prophecies of Merlin, according to which, as interpreted by the Tudor bards, the Arthurian empire was to be restored, and the true British line seated upon the English throne.[1] This was precisely what had come to pass; for the Stuarts claimed descent through Banquo's son, Fleance, whose escape from the assassins is so strongly emphasized in the tragedy; and whose subsequent flight into Wales, and marriage with a British princess, mingles British and Stuart blood. How, then, could a more regal, or nobler, dramatic compliment, than this of "Macbeth," be paid to the first among those kings who should

> The three-fold balls and treble sceptres carry;

and whose line, defying the powers of malignant evil, should "stretch out to the crack of doom." Here was kingly compensation, indeed, for the mockery of that same prince, many years before, as Bottom, in "A Midsummer Night's Dream"; [2] and, linked with it, some subtle flattery of a monarch, who, while realizing the occult and malignant powers of witch, and of warlock, was, nevertheless, wise enough, by comprehending, to overcome them.

Oxford, then, for his theme, in its bare outline—as also for double purposes of disguise, and of epical scope,

[1] See Miss Winstanley's "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History," cap. I.

[2] See ante p. 241.

and expansion—goes straight to Scottish history, which he will not hesitate to distort, for his purpose; but for the warm, passionate, vitalizing of his subject, with human motive and emotion, he will turn to the contemporaneous life-story of men and women, whom he knew, both personally, and by repute; namely, to that of Mary, Queen of Scots, King James's own mother, at whose trial, in 1586, imaginatively thrilled by the horrible tale, he had sat with his compeers in judgment. Secondly, he will look, for further material, to those treacherous, yet darkly alluring, Valois-Medicis, with whom, in days gone by, his life, as a courtier, had brought him into the closest personal contact.

Long before reading Miss Winstanley's penetrating book, "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History," I had reached the conclusion, that Lord and Lady Macbeth were, mainly, Mary and Bothwell; but, on going, one day, to the British Museum, for the purpose of securing further evidence, I found that the able author of "Hamlet and the Scottish Succession" had forestalled me, by proving, beyond reasonable doubt, that my surmise had been perfectly correct.

Macbeth, and his lady, then, are simply Mary and Bothwell, the Gertrude and Claudius, of "Hamlet," raised to a higher plane, or power; but—though, for the full argument, I refer readers to Miss Winstanley's enthralling study—I must find space to include a few points from her long list, beginning with the central theme of the play—Macbeth's insatiable ambition. That fault was characteristic of Mary's lover; for Robertson, in his "History of Scotland," writes:

> No man's ambition was more daring than Bothwell's, or had recourse to bolder and more singular expedients for retaining power:[1]

and it is worth noting, in this connection, that the historic murder of Duff had, as its determining motive, not ambition, but revenge. Other parallels between

[1] Quoted *Ibid.*, p. 65.

historic fact, and Shakespeare's tragedy, strike one, at once; for immediately upon approaching the murder of Duncan, in the play, we find mention of that

guest of summer,
The temple-haunting martlet

as though—by a method that we have seen the author of the sonnets, and of "Romeo and Juliet," already adopting—our dramatist would remind us that the martlet was a badge of the House of Lorraine, to which, upon her mother's side, Mary, Queen of Scots, belonged.[1] Throughout the historic account of the crime, by Buchanan, Pitcairn, and others, the analogies between Macbeth, and the Darnley murder, are extraordinarily close; including the drink, for which Macbeth calls; the removal of clothes; the pretence of sleep; the knocking at the door; the cry of "Treason!" and the murder of the servants.[2] Further, one of the chief accusers is Darnley's father, the Earl of Lennox; and Lennox is also one of the chief accusers in "Macbeth"; while the hallucination of the dagger floating in the air, above the bodies of the king and his servant, and a picture of a metal-studded door, that received the blows, are prominent features in that striking contemporary record of the murder—the plan preserved in the Museum of the Record Office in London; a document which I suppose to have formed, in the original, or in reproduction, one of the "exhibits," at Mary's trial. Striking also is this line, from "Macbeth," II, 2—

MAC. Will all great Neptune's ocean wash the blood
Clean from my hand?—

set against this, from the Calendar of State Papers, April 13, 1567—

James Earl of Bothwell has set up a writing subscribed with his hand that he was "cleansed" of the king's murder.

[1] Miss Winstanley adds (p. 67) that the Cardinal of Lorraine was supposed to have instigated the Darnley murder. We have seen Oxford frequently using coats-of-arms and family mottoes, as clues to identity, in the sonnets and plays.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 75.

As for the witches, who play so prominent a part in the plot of "Macbeth," King James's belief, and interest, in them, is a matter of common knowledge; though not all my readers may know that Bothwell-Macbeth trafficked freely with the powers of evil. Thus Sir James Melville, in his Memoirs :—[1]

> About this time (1591) many witches were tane in Lowdien who deponit of some attempts made by the Earl Bothwell, as they alleged, against his Majesty's person.

Masson, in his preface to the "Register of the Privy Council of Scotland," writes, as follows, concerning Francis, the younger Bothwell, who was a Catholic, and a persistent Catholic conspirator.

> No man of public mark, it appears, had been so deep in this witchcraft business as Bothwell, so intimate and incessant in consultation with the noted witches and warlocks of the time.[2]

Miss Winstanley shews, beyond doubt, that every detail of the witch-scenes, in "Macbeth," corresponds, exactly, with those of Scottish witch-trials; and she adds the interesting note, that Catherine de Medicis, who is now coming prominently into Macbeth's story, was accused by the Huguenots, of almost exactly similar practises—a remark which brings us, at once, to the secondary motive of the Macbeth story—the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

That Oxford, personally, as well as England, in general, was profoundly moved by that event, I have already made clear to my readers. The massacre was accomplished on August 24, 1572; and in a letter endorsed September, of that year, Oxford, then twenty-two years old, and a *persona grata* at court, had written to his father-in-law, Burleigh, of the "news which here doth ring dolefully in the ears of every man, of the murder of the Admiral of France." We have also seen him, as Shakespeare, bringing that motive, very significantly, into the opening

[1] Quoted *ibid.*, p. 95. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 100.

scenes of "Twelfth Night," when Olivia mourns over the "dead love" of a brother, who, considered as an individual, is, unquestionably, Coligny[1]; the "Admiral" to whom Oxford's letter referred. Now Miss Winstanley has made it perfectly clear, that, in the eyes of French and Scottish Protestants, taken as a whole, the murder of Darnley, and the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, though separated by five years of historic time, were usually considered together, as being due, alike, to Roman Catholic plotting, instigated by the families of Guise and Medici. Shakespeare, moreover, as we have seen in the cases of "Othello," and of "Hamlet," loved—for the double purposes of concealment, and of drama—to piece together a primary motive with a secondary one, capable of being closely dovetailed into it. What more natural, then, than that, for this tragedy, in which he develops into a primary theme, the crime of Claudius and Gertrude, in "Hamlet"—who were but secondary persons of that play, so far as their characters, and personalities, were concerned—he should add to Bothwell and Mary, for whom they stand, something taken from Catherine, and her hapless son, Charles IX; the two beings primarily responsible for the massacre.

In Chapter VII,[1] of her book, Miss Winstanley again makes out a case for her analogies, which open with a comparison between the reluctant wavering of Charles IX, spurred on to the deed by his mother, precisely as Macbeth was urged on by his wife. De Thou relates how, before the massacre, "the queen went, at midnight, to the chamber of the king, fearing that he would change his resolution," and there follow, in the actual sequence of events, insistence, by the woman, on the uniqueness

[1] Alençon, the historic original of Orsino, in that play, was in Paris at the time of the massacre, and discussed Coligny's murder with his brother, Charles IX, Henry (afterwards Henry III, whom Oxford was to meet in Paris in 1575) and the Queen-Mother. Charles, Henry and Catherine are all characters of "King Lear." See post p. 350.

[2] pp. 116-131, "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History."

of the opportunity—"time and place" both fitted to the deed—the irresolution of Charles, the plea for the victims, the woman's taunt of cowardice, and the man's anger thereat—none of which, though common to history, and to the play, are mentioned in the literary source, Holinshed. The bell-motive also (II, 1)—

> the bell invites me.
> Hear it not, Duncan, for it is a knell
> That summons thee to heaven or to hell—

is no less historical; for De Thou writes, that the queen, "fearing that he would relent, gave the signal for the bell of St. Germain L'Auxerrois to be tolled"; Charles's own soubriquet, for that relentless woman, being "Madame la Serpente"—a name recalled by Lady Macbeth's own words:—

> look like the innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under't.

Further, just as Coligny and his people were at prayers, when the assassins arrived, so Macbeth, before the crime,

> stood and heard them.
> But they did say their prayers—

and again, just as the occasion for the massacre was the marriage-feast of Henry of Navarre, and Marguerite de Valois (Princess of France, of "Love's Labour's Lost") —at which Coligny was to have been the most honoured guest—so also Macbeth (III, 4) had prepared a great welcome for "our dear friend, Banquo, whom we miss." Both Banquo and Coligny are slain by the light of torches.[1] Coligny's corpse, disfigured with blood, was dragged through the gutters; and one of the murderers said of Banquo (III, 4):—

> safe in a ditch he bides,
> With twenty trenched gashes in his head;
> The least a debt to nature.

Charles, after the massacre, was troubled, like Macbeth,

[1] *Ibid*, p. 122.

with bloody, and terrifying, visions and hallucinations, and was haunted by that same doom of sleeplessness, pronounced by the voices, crying to Macbeth, without respite :—

> Sleep no more! Macbeth doth murder sleep.

Even the ominous raven (I, 5),

> That croaks the fatal entrance of Duncan
> Under my battlements ;

and the fearful lines (III, 4) :—

> Augurs, and understood relations, have
> By magot-pies, and choughs, and rooks brought forth
> The secret'st man of blood—

find their parallel in d'Aubigné, when he wrote :—

> Eight days after the massacre there came a great army of crows, some croaking and others perching on the great pavilion of the Louvre—

it being from the Louvre that Catherine had ordered the signal to be given, for the commencement of the massacre.

Lastly, French history presents us with a striking parallel to the show of eight kings—the last of them with a glass in his hand—who, by the witches' power, are summoned, to symbolize the continuance of the royal line, from Fleance to King James : for Pierre Mathieu, in his book, "La Mort Déplorable de Henri IV," writes :

> The Marshall of Rais wife had been heard say that Queen Catherine being desirous to know what should become of her children and who should succeed them, the party which undertook to assure her, let her see a glass representing a hall, in which either of them made so many turns, as he should reign years, that King Henry III making his, the Duke of Guise crossed him like a flash of lightning, after which the Prince of Navarre presented himself and made twenty-two-turns and then vanished.[1]

In view of these parallels, among many more, that Miss

[1] Quoted *Ibid.*, p. 129.

Winstanley has adduced, it seems idle to deny that Shakespeare, when he wrote "Macbeth," had vividly present to his mind these two outstanding events of 1567 and 1572, with some principal participants in which, or with their near relatives, Oxford had come into immediate, personal contact; even to adjudging one of them guilty of treason. Is it, then, matter for surprise, that, working upon this drama, in the full maturity of his genius, and imparting to it so much that was of mighty import in the history of three countries, including his own, at a time when events had told him, with no uncertain voice, that his own most cherished dreams and ambitions, in common with those of Macbeth, were destined to vanish in disillusion?—is it surprising, I ask, that so lofty a theme—ranging, as it did, historically, over many centuries, and actually over three lands—lifted his tragic muse to a power, and pitch, of exalted poetic achievement, such as himself, even, had never before attained, nor was ever quite to reach again? What wonder that Shakespeare's greatest rival, Chapman, vainly striving to emulate the master, chose the loftiest passages of "Macbeth," as models for his most daring flights, into obscure regions of metaphysical and transcendantal verse![1]

But although, as a poet, Shakespeare was never to exceed his own achievement in "Macbeth"; as a dramatist he was to reach even greater heights, in the play that may have followed "Macbeth." Considered merely as a work for the stage, the greatest melodrama he ever wrote—or that any one ever wrote—was not "Macbeth," but "Hamlet": regarded as a creation of the human mind, the grandest, and most titanically sublime of all his plays, of all the world's dramatic literature, that has come down to us, is, beyond comparison, the tragedy of "King Lear."

[1] See my "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," cap. VI.

## "KING LEAR"

"Hamlet" was first printed in a much abbreviated, and certainly unauthorized form, in the year 1603; and it was, I suspect, the appearance of this pirated version, that in 1604, led to the appearance of the complete text, which, I imagine, would otherwise, have been held back, perhaps until the Folio. "Macbeth" did not appear, in print, until the Folio of 1623; "King Lear" first appearing in 1608, just at the time when, as we have seen, the widowed Countess of Oxford was disposing of King's Place; and the sonnets also were, at last, coming to light. "King Lear" seems to have been first played before the king, at Whitehall, at Christmas, 1606, which year, or 1605, is the date to which the tragedy is generally ascribed. Many authorities urge that, since the names of Edgar's devils, and other allusions, are taken, apparently, from Harsnett's "Declaration of Egregious Popish Impostures," first published in 1603, "Lear" cannot have been written earlier than that date; but Capt. Holland, in his "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," [1] shews that some of the references in Harsnett's book—e.g. that of Edgar to "knives and halters" (III, 4)—occur in the depositions of a witness, Friswood Williams, first taken on March 2, 1598, but repeated, and augmented on May 17, 1602; and he adds, very significantly, that some of these witnesses, at the instigation of certain Jesuit priests—who terrified them into the belief that they were possessed with devils—had actually met at the house of Lord Vaux, at Hackney, close to Oxford's own home, King's Place, where he was then living. Capt. Holland further shews that the reference, by Gloucester, in I, 2, to "These late eclipses in the sun and moon," is, probably, a recollection of the phenomenon which occurred on March 6, 1598, and does not refer to the total eclipse of the sun, of October, 1605,

[1] pp. 90-92.

which, according to one commentator, fixes definitively the date of "King Lear."

Lastly, provided with the Oxford clue, we shall see, later, that Kent, who stands for Oxford in the plays, says, in answer to Lear, "I have years o' my back forty-eight," which is precisely Oxford's age in 1598; the probable date for the first draft of the play. In writing his tragedy the Earl used exactly the same methods that he applied to other plays of the period, taking the bare outline of his story, this time, not from Scottish, but from English legendary history; the popular folk tale of King Lear—originally, like Hamlet, a nature-myth—which he transmuted to tragedy, from the comedy form in which Holinshed and Geoffrey of Monmouth set it down; weaving into it, as an under-plot, the story of Gloucester and his son, taken, it seems, from Sidney's pastoral romance, "Arcadia." Shakespeare may also have borrowed a few ideas from the old comedy of "King Lear and His Three Daughters," which was entered in the books of the Stationers' Company in 1594.[1]

All this adherence to an English theme is, however, no more than superficial. Carefully analyzed, as Miss Winstanley has analyzed it, in the closing chapter of her book, "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History," the theme is seen to be, at bottom, not English, but Scottish and French; a further dramatization, in fact, of those central, though equally concealed, themes of "Macbeth"—the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, and events that led up to it, with many details from the Darnley murder again worked in. Shakespeare's deep concern with both these tragic happenings I have already shewn; as also the fact that they were inseparably linked together in the protestant mind of the day.

The tragedy of Lear, otherwise the tragedy of France, touches the fate of that unhappy country, between the

[1] I have carefully examined this play, but cannot find important borrowings.

last years of Coligny, in the late fifteen-sixties, and the Peace of Vervins, with Spain, followed by the Edict of Nantes, in the same year (1598)—the very year, as we have seen, in which, probably, the play was first drafted. Shakespeare dramatized his subject symbolically, in much the same way that Mathieu, for example, in his intensely interesting work, "La Mort Déplorable de Henry IV," and D'Aubigné, in "Les Tragiques," recount the same events, in symbolized narrative form. The ungrateful children of Lear, symbolically regarded, are simply "the factions of a civil war tearing the fatherland to pieces"; [1] as historical beings they are Catherine de Medicis, her sons, and her daughter, with the first named of whom, in actual fact, the guilt primarily lay. Appalling was the state of that fatherland, in the year 1598, with which we are concerned.

> Thirty years of war left France covered with ruins. The authority of the crown was gone. Self-constituted Governors raised troops, imposed taxes, and administered what seemed to them justice. Large tracts of the country were devastated and deserted. The peasantry had lost their crops, and the merchants had lost their trade. "More than half the noblesse," reported an English traveller, "is perished, the people diminished, the treasure exhausted, the debts increased, good order overthrown, religion vanquished, manners debauched, justice corrupted, and men divided." (Dallington, 1598). [2]

Is it surprising that Oxford, deeply sympathetic towards France, made a grim tragedy of "King Lear"?

With the least important aspect of that tragedy—its connection with the Darnley murder—I have no space to deal; but will direct the reader to pages 147–48, of Miss Winstanley's book, where he will find them epitomized, mainly from Buchanan's "Detection of the Doings of Mary, Queen of Scots," and the appended "Oration." The facts of the crime, as Miss Winstanley

[1] "Macbeth, King Lear, and Contemporary History," p. 145.
[2] J. M. Thompson, "Lectures on Foreign History," 1494-1789 p. 144.

summarizes them, present far closer parallels, with Shakespeare's play, than does anything in Holinshed or the other chronicles. Darnley, of course, stands for Lear himself, and Mary for Goneril; it being interesting to note that the Goneril of the play does, actually, become the wife of Albany, which was one of Darnley's titles. Goneril's rascally steward, Oswald, stands in much the same relation of insolent authority to, and over, Lear, as his prototype, Rizzio, Mary's low-born Italian servant, does to Darnley, King of Scotland. Bothwell, of course, is Edmund; Lady Bothwell stands for Regan; and Miss Winstanley holds that Murray—whom Darnley caused to be banished, but who returned, privately, and in concealment "in the endeavour to help him to get the crown matrimonial"—gave Shakespeare hints for Kent—an idea that becomes intensely suggestive, in connection with what is to follow, concerning the banishment-motive of this play.

But we must now turn from the Scottish, to the French interpretation of "King Lear's" central plot. Shakespeare in this play, as much as he did in "Macbeth," has cunningly blended, into one tragedy, two stories, which, in their bare outlines, shew certain resemblances, and which as the dramatist well knew, were closely linked together in the protestant minds of all three nations; the general belief being that both crimes had a common purpose—namely, to avert the protestant succession in England, and to place both countries in the power of the Guises.

Considering the play, then, from a French view-point, the historic identity of Lear cannot, for an instant, be doubted. He is Coligny, Admiral of France, a proposition which, once considered, leads us to a deeply interesting, and powerfully convincing, piece of evidence in support of our case for Oxford as "Shakespeare."

The Earl, from his boyhood days, was deeply interested in history, as we know from the dedication to him of "Th' Abridgement of the Historie of Trogus

Pompeius," by his uncle, and erstwhile tutor, Arthur Golding, in May, 1564, when Oxford was fourteen years old.[1]

> For it is not unknown to others, and I have had experience thereof myself, how earnest a desire your honour hath naturally graffed in you to read, peruse, and communicate with others as well the histories of ancient times, and things done long ago,[2] as also of the present estate of things in our days, and that not without a certain pregnancy of wit, and ripeness of understanding.

Now when discussing that early Shakesperean play, "Two Gentlemen of Verona," I noted, as readers may remember, a double use, by Oxford, of the rare word "metamorphose," suggesting that his mind, at the time, was running upon that same uncle's translation of Ovid's "Metamorphosis," published in 1575, which, by general consent of the critics, greatly influenced Shakespeare, irrespective of that writer's identity. Now Golding one year later, in 1576, published a "Life of Gaspar Coligny"—a fact which, coming to my knowledge at a time when I was already hot-foot upon the track of the historic original of Lear, awakened hopes that were destined to be fulfilled. "If one book was a favourite of Oxford's, I argued, "why not the other equally?" I sought the volume, accordingly, and, opening it, found encouragement upon the first page.

"Waterish Burgundy" is a country with which I have been familiar for years; and concerning which I have written, and spoken, many times. Naturally enough, therefore, when reading "Lear," I had often asked myself why the Duke of Burgundy, and the King of France, should be thrust so prominently into the opening scene of a tragedy treating of an English king, in an English setting. When, however, I read, on the first page of Golding's book, that the Admiral's family came

[1] Ward's "Oxford," p. 23, 24.

[2] *Cf.* for example, sonnets 98–100 in the rhyme-linked order. See ante pp. 182–184.

from the town Colonie, on the borders of Bresse, "not far from Burgundie," I saw, at once, that the play was actually located, not in England, but upon the Burgundian border; and remembering further Shakespeare's interest in Julius Cæsar, I noted carefully this passage also :—

> It is an old opinion among the inhabiters there (i.e. of the Lordship of Colonie, afterwards corrupted to Coligny) that it disagreeth not with Cæsar's writings, that it is the same place wherein Cæsar at his arrivell with his armie in *Fraunce*, heard the Ambassadors of the Burgonions and Nivernoys complaining of the Switzers for comming into *Fraunce* with an armie, and for wasting their countrie. For the next hill retaineth the name of Julius, and is called Jules mount unto this day, and the towne hard by it is named Cesaree.

Golding, quite evidently, was describing a country which, for his history-loving nephew, was packed with interest, new and old. I proceeded to read the book through, at a sitting, and found, as I had expected to find, that here, indeed, was the genuine literary source of "King Lear," supplementing Holinshed, and the old play of 1594. Let us glance at one or two of the parallels.

The tragedy, as all the world knows, opens, after a preliminary scene, with Lear sitting enthroned, and with a map before him, proceeding to distribute his kingdom, which, historically, is not England, but France. Now at the conclusion of Golding's book, there is a passage concerning Coligny's will, which includes remarks upon the division of power among the sons of the Queen Mother, Catherine de Medicis; introducing, at the same time, an England motive. That passage, transferred by Shakespeare, from the close of the book, to the beginning of the play, furnished him, as I suggest, with cues for his opening scenes. Thus wrote Golding :—

> Among divers writings that were taken in the riffeling of his stuffe (i.e. after his murder) was found his will, made

a little before the end of the last warres, which ye Queene moother commaunded to bee red before certeine of his familiar freends. In the same there was one article, wherein the testator counselled the King, that he should not give his brothers too greate richesse, and authoritie. At the heering whereof, the Queene turning to Frauncis, Duke of Aleunson, the king's brother, saith. Lo heere your odde friend the Admiral, whom you loved so deerely and set so much store by. To whom the Duke of Aleunson answered: I cannot tell how much he was my freend: but surely he hath well shewed even by this counsel, how greatly he loved the king. Not unlike too this was the Queene of Ingland's Ambassadours answer, Who, when the Queene moother told him that the Admiral had counseled the king too bee always gelous of the power of Ingland: answered, surely that mind of his was evill towardes Inglande, but singularly good towardes Fraunce.

All this close correspondence, of motive and idea, between the book and the play, will strike every careful reader; but, at this point, I may pertinently be asked to supply further evidence, that Coligny is the historic original of Lear. This is easily forthcoming. Lear, of the play, is very much a father; and the Admiral, by reason of age, and of authority, was frequently addressed as "father," even by Catherine de Medicis herself, and by members of her family. His power and authority, moreover, were wielded largely in and around the region of the Loire (Lear), and, unquestionably, were of almost royal degree: for on August 26, 1566, Fitzwilliam wrote to Oxford's future father-in-law, Cecil, concerning Coligny:—

> The admiral is of great power and well beloved of all the best soldiers of France. It is thought that he has at commandement 30,000 men.

Golding writes:

> It is certeine that the howse had the right of soverentie (which after the custom of antiquitie is called Royalties), so as they had power of life and death over the folke of their Seniorie, with authority to pardon such as were con-

demned to die, and to coyne money stamped with the marke of the crowned Eagle, and to rayse taxes and subsidies upon their tenaunts and fermors when neede required. . . . He (Coligny) was made Lord Admirall of *Fraunce*, which is counted the chiefest dignitie within the Realme, because hee hath the cheef rule of the Sea that beateth uppon *Fraunce*, and the charge of the King's Navie and of all his seamen and seamatters.

The fact that Coligny's ancestor, Hubbard, had been to the second Crusade, with the Emperor Conrad III, in 1046, fifty-two years before Oxford's ancestor, Aubrey, the second Earl, had fought as Crusader, before Antioch, would, assuredly, deepen Oxford's sympathy with the house of Coligny, and his interest concerning their subsequent place in history.

Coligny (Lear) and Guise—the Edmund of the play—were, for a time, so intimate that "insomuch that to testifie their friendship with all, they went apparaled in like rayment."[1] Later on, they quarrel bitterly; first over Sicily, and then over the marriage of Guise's brother, the Duc d'Aumale,

> "To whom (Guise) the Admirall answered, that he made more account of an ynch of good name, then of never so great riches, which saying of the Admirals the Duke of Guise and the Duke of Aumale tooke in great displeazure, as though it had beene spoken to barre the house of Gwyse from greater power preferment and preheminence."

This matter of "making more account of an inch of good name than of never so great riches," is a sentiment that would at once appeal to Oxford, who, ever since the Arundel slanders, and the writing of that early poem, "Loss of Good Name,"[2] was constantly introducing both themes into his plays, as my readers very well know.

[1] *Cf.* Sebastian and Viola in "Twelfth Night"—"For him I imitate"—Viola (La Môle) being in the service of one of these same Valois, namely Alençon. See my "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 24–30.

[2] See ante pp. 29–31.

Passage after passage from Golding recalls, or suggests, motives from Lear, as, for example, when Coligny "kindled their (the Guises) hatred against him the more vehemently," by protesting, at Fontainebleau, against so many "men of warre which ye howse of Gwyse hath gathered together in the hart of the realm, under coloure of garding the king's person, as though the king were in a foreign countrie."

All this comes very close, in feeling, to Goneril's request to Lear (I, 4)—

> a little to disquantity your train—

and—Catherine de Medicis being the prototype of Goneril—it is interesting to read Golding's statement, concerning the accession of Charles IX (Albany in the play), that it is shewn

> by the hystories of all ages, that the government of the Realme was never yit committed to Queene Mothers, yspecially if they were straungers born, but it was too the undooing and destruction of the commonweale of Fraunce and a cause of civill discord.

Similarly, when Golding writes, of Coligny, that he is "determined to put on armes, and too make warre uppon the house of Gwyse, too set the king at libertie," we are reminded, by an easy transposition of ideas, of Cordelia, with her forces, in IV, 4, seeking her king and father, with the object of restoring to him his legitimate, and royal, rights. It is interesting, again, to note, that Catherine, at this time, makes a progress to Bayonne, to see her son-in-law, Philip II of Spain, who, with Catherine's daughter, Philip's wife, Elizabeth of Valois, we have seen standing for Othello and Desdemona.[1] Thus intimately are grouped together, in history, the principal characters of various Shakesperean plays! Here is another deeply significant passage.

> Then the other man to go through with the rest of his errand, desired the king to send sum part of his gard too

[1] See ante pp. 316–318.

the Admirall. To whom the Duke of Angeow, who was come thither with his moother, sayd: very well, take Mounsyre Cossins too yow with fifty hargabattes. No (quoth the other) it is ynough for us if wee may have but six of the King's gard with us. For they shall beare as much sway with the people as a greater number of armed men. Nay, mary (*quoth* the King), and so said the Duke of Aniow too, take Mounsyre Cossins too yow: yow cannot choose a fitter man. At which woordes, uttered (as it should seeme) with stomack inough, ye messenger who knew Mounsyre Cossins to be ye Admirals deadly enemie, was notwithstandyng stryken dumb. And ere he was gone farre from the chamber, he found Mounsyre Thorrey the Marshall Memorencies brother, who whispering in his eare, sayd: there could not a more hatefull keeper have bin appoynted to you. Too whom the other answered, yow see how skornfully the King commaunded it: wee have committed ourselves to his courtesies.

It is, I think, impossible to read carefully the above lines, with their mention of fifty hargabattes, etc., to compare it with Regan's (II, 4),

> fifty followers?
> Is it not well? What should you need of more?
> Yea, or so many: sith that both charge and danger
> Speak 'gainst so great a number. How in one house
> Should many people under two commands
> Hold amity?—

and then to deny the closeness of the analogies. This question of the number of attendants, and the talk of the "hatefull keeper . . . appointed to you," can all be fitted easily to various familiar episodes of "King Lear"; though the most striking of all the parallels is that with the storm, of which no mention is made in Holinshed, or in *Gesta Romanorum*, and only a hint or two, as follows, in "The History of King Lear and His Three Daughters."

> GON. Well after him Ile send such thunderclaps
> Of slaunder, scandall, and invented tales,
> That all the blame shall be remov'd from me.

And this :—

> MESS. Why then, by hell, and all the devils I sweare.
> LEIR. Sweare not by hell; for that stands gaping wide
> To swallow thee, and if thou do this deed.
> (*Thunder and lightning.*)
> PER. O just Jehova! whose almighty power
> Doth governe all things in this spacious world,
> How canst thou suffer such outrageous acts?

Shakespeare, I think, got a hint or two here; but in Golding's book the tempest-motive is elaborated, in a manner so vivid as to linger, even, in the memory of the casual reader; and, assuredly, to set aflame the sensitive spirit of Golding's imaginative nephew, who, moreover, was personally acquainted with some, if not with all, of the principals of the story. Thus Golding :—

> Not farre from the town of Molens (Moulins), as ye go to Auxerre there is a lake : [1] whereunto when the Admirall was come, a certein olde man of his companie named Gripper, a man skilfull by reason of manye long voyages by sea, and singularly faithfull and looving towardes the Admirall, espyed a blacke clowd driven with the wynd beating very vehemently against that part of the lake: whereupon he began to warn the Admirall in the heering of a greate number, too put spurres to his horse, and too hye him apace to the next village, least they myghte be over taken with the tempest at hand. As soon as he had sayd so, thinking that the rest had beleeved him and followed after him he hyed him on alone. He was scarcely out of syght, but suddenly there arose such a storme as the Admirall was passing the narrow bankes of the lake, that manie, not only men but also horses, were throwen downe with the whirlewynd, and dyvers hurt with the violence and weyghte of the hayle, and had much adoo to scape with their lyves. The wind blew the Admiralls hat from his head, which could never be found agein when the tempest was ceassed. But one of his

[1] Probably the lake La Colancelle, some 14 miles N.W. of Moulins-Engilbert, in the direct line of route to Auxerre in N. Burgundy. No lake is visible on my maps, near the larger town, Moulin-sur-Allier, further south.

companie delivered him another: neither was he (for all that) hurt in any part of him, saving in his ancle, where the vehement disputing of the hayle gave a good pretie pelt. Surely if the violence of the wynd had lyen against the head of the lake, no dowt but that day had bin the last of the Admiralles lyfe and of all his companies. When the tempest was allayd the Admirall having comforted his companie, sayd: "I thanke thee O almighte God, whose present miracle I deeme too foretoken, that wee shall shortly be pressed, howbeit not oppressed with manie sorrows.

Here the parallels are obvious. The river, with the lake near by, give us Edgar's "ford and whirlpool, bog and quagmire"; the "pretie pelt" reappears, in the "pelting of this pitiless storm"; the loss of the Admiral's hat seems to be hinted at, in the line "Alas, bareheaded!"; Gripper's warning to his master, to spur on to the next village, recalls the Fool's, "Good nuncle, in," as also the shelter, at last, in the hovel. Finally, Coligny's prayer suggests Lear's majestic invocation to the storm, and his appeal to the great gods, to "Find out their enemies now." [1]

Shakespeare's intention, of course, was, in part, symbolical; and, correspondingly, we find, in Golding, symbolical references, in the manner of the time, to the tempest that had burst over France. For example:—

The tempest that was lyke by some fatal mischaunce too fall upon his afflicted and forlorne countrie.

Almost ten thousand protestants (in England, Scotland and Germany) being stricken in feare, and amazed with that storme, fled into those countries.

Lastly, this couple of extracts, from the book, tellingly

[1] Lear's reference to his own shortcomings in the past:

O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp:
Expose thyself to fell what wretches feel

finds parallel in Coligny's own words: "Would God I could leade a holier lyfe," and, referring to his wife's recent death: "specially her singular lovingnesse and liberalitie towards the poore and towards sicke folkes—The Physicion," etc.

suggest how Oxford may have been first led to picture these great events as a play. The first example is when we are told how, at the time of the massacre, Lord Ferrers was talking with Navarre, Condé, and others, in the room below that wherein Coligny lay wounded; and Lord Ferrers explained "that this was the *first pageant of some tragedie*, whereof the rest should follow soon after." The second example is when Coligny, in a letter to his wife, of August 18, 1572—six days only before his murder—writes these lines, suggestive of close imaginative intimacy with the events to which they allude :—

> I had the originall copie in my hand, which seemed to carry greate weyghte with it for the setting forth of the truth of the storie. . . . Theis next three days will be spent in playes, bankettings, masks and triumphs.

True! and they end in play of sword and dagger, and in triumph of treachery, and the flowing blood of invited wedding-guests!

One other point, hereabouts, is worth noting—that, returning to what is almost a companion play to "Lear," namely "Macbeth," which links up, as we have seen, with the ancient Franco-British legends—the "minister of God" who sat by Coligny's bedside, after he had been shot, bore the suggestive name Merlyn.

Here we reach considerations of paramount importance; not merely in relation to "King Lear," but, by wider inference, to the whole question of the authorship of the plays.

We have seen Gabriel Harvey, the Holofernes of "Love's Labour's Lost," lampooning Oxford, in the "Mirrour of Tuscanismo."[1] Now in 1598 was published an edition of Chaucer, a copy of which, it seems, Harvey immediately purchased, and proceeded, at intervals, to insert therein, in various languages, marginal notes, commenting, sometimes with enthusiasm, upon his favourite authors. These "Marginalia" of Harvey's

[1] See ante pp. 115–117.

were published, with photographic facsimiles, by Professor Moore Smith, in 1913. They are of great interest to Elizabethan students, and especially to those concerned with Oxford, because the references to a certain "Axiophilus" are, most probably, to Oxford, as Shakespeare. Mrs. Eva Clark, in her book "Axiophilus," has made out a fairly plausible case for her contention, that the name is, really, an anagram for "Oxford alias Shakespeare," with a second meaning, "Lover of Truth," referring to de Vere's family motto, "Vero Nihil Verius." Even though the anagram be rejected, however, Harvey's references to Axiophilus generally apply, very aptly, to Oxford, as the following extracts will shew :—

> Excellent matter of emulation for Spencer, Constable, France, Watson, Daniel, Warner, Chapman, Silvester, Shakespeare, and the rest of owr flourishing metricians . . . and amongst so manie gentle, noble, and royall spirits meethinkes I see sum heroical thing in the clowdes : mie souveraine hope. Axiophilus shall forgett himself, or will remember to leave sum memorials behind him : and to make a use of so manie rhapsodies, cantos, hymnes, odes, epigrams, sonets, and discourses as idle howers, or at flowing fitts he hath compiled. God knows what is good for the world, and fitting for this age. Finis.[1]

Here "Axiophilus" is directly referred to, among those nobles who have written far more than they have published ; and it must be borne in mind that, in 1592, six years before that copy of Chaucer was published, Harvey, after "cordially recommending" many names "to the deare Lovers of the Muses," had written :—

> For I dare not name the Honorabler Sonnes and Nobler Daughters of the sweetest and divinest Muses, that ever sang in English or other language ; and their owne most delectable and delicious Exercises.[2]

If the reader will compare these words of Harvey's

[1] "Axiophilus," p. 24. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

with those written by Lord Lumley, in "The Arte of English Poesie" (1589):—

> And in Her Majesty's time that now is are sprung up another crew of Courtly makers (i.e. poets) Noblemen and Gentlemen of Her Majestys own servants, who have written excellently well as it would appear if their doings could be found out and made public with the rest, of which number is first that noble gentleman Edward Earl of Oxford—[1]

does it not become almost certain, that Harvey, in common with Lord Lumley and other educated persons, of the time, interested in contemporary literature, knew, perfectly well, who, among the rest, "Axiophilus" was; but "dare not name" him, as the author of the plays; for reasons which this book, I hope, has made sufficiently clear.

And now I reach the link with "King Lear," for which my readers will have been waiting. Among the "Marginalia," by Harvey, occur these words.[2]

> M. Digges hath the whole Aquarius of Palengenius bie hert: and takes much delight to repeat it often. M. Spenser conceives the like pleasure in the fourth day of the first Weeke of Bartas. Which he esteems as the proper profession of Urania.
>
> Axiophilus makes the like account of the Columnes, and the Colonies of Bartas. Which he commonly addes to the Spheare of Buchanan. Divine, and heroicall works: and excellent Cantiques for a mathematicall wit.

Here, I submit, is full corroboration of the substance of this chapter; for among the works in which—even though he may not have known them quite "bie hert"—"Axiophilus" evidently took great delight, are cited the Colonies (Colignys) of Bartas—Bartas being the famous Huguenot poet (1544–1590) whose sacred epic, "La Création," sometimes known as "The Weeks," was translated into English by Sylvester and, un-

[1] Quoted Ward's "Oxford," p. 299. [2] "Axiophilus," p. 22.

doubtedly, used by Shakespeare, in 1598; the precise year which, by a wholly different process of reasoning, we have already been led to suggest as that of the probable drafting of "King Lear." Bartas had served, under Coligny, in the civil war in France, was an intimate friend of Jeanne de Navarre (Jeanne d'Albret), mother of King Henry IV, and the historic original of Cordelia in "Lear." He had visited England and Scotland once at least, and was, probably, known personally to Oxford. He was a personal favourite of James of Scotland, who tried to keep him permanently in his service. Finally, as another clinching corroboration, we have "Axiophilus" further written of, in these "Marginalia," as adding to Bartas, among his favourite authors, the "Spheare of Buchanan," i.e. those very works, by the Scotchman, "The Detection" and "The Oration," which we have already seen Shakespeare using so freely, for "Hamlet" and "Macbeth." By way of still further linking up, it is interesting to note that we have James I—whom I have already shewn to be, in some degree, a part original of Hamlet—receiving the dedication of Sylvester's translation of Du Bartas' epic—certainly used by Shakespeare—and himself, as royal author, indulging in "poeticall exercies," upon the preface to Bartas's "Second Week," namely "The Furies."

Will any reader still be disposed to deny that the author of "King Lear," whether Oxford or another, must have been intimate—personally, or through their writings, or more probably still through both media—with Oxford, Golding, Bartas, Buchanan, and Coligny, if not with King James himself? Is it not evident that Shakespeare must have formed one of the distinguished group about, and among, whom were produced the tragic masterpieces of his mature years?

I must now epitomize, very briefly, the arguments advanced in Miss Winstanley's "Macbeth, Lear, and Contemporary History," for connecting Coligny, historically, with the theme of "King Lear." In this pene-

trating book [1] Lear is depicted as an old man, but still

> a man of tremendous force and energy; Coligny, at the time he was murdered, was an old man, as that time counted age, and he himself appealed to his murderers to respect his white hairs; yet Coligny was a man still of tremendous physical force; the Lear of Shakespeare had been a great soldier. . . . Coligny was undoubtedly one of the greatest soldiers of his age.
>
> The Lear of Shakespeare is a man of terrific passions, capable of most appalling rages and unequalled imprecations; so was Coligny, who, when angry, rated the whole royal family of France with the utmost fury.
>
> Lear is stripped naked in a tempest and deserted by all. Coligny, deserted by all, was exposed to the jeers of the passers-by. . . . Coligny's followers declared that Coligny was the father of his country, outraged by his ungrateful children, and that all France suffered in his person. All France is with him exposed naked to the tempest of St. Bartholomew. Singing ribald songs, the populace of Paris crowned the effigy of Coligny with straw; and singing senseless songs, Lear crowns himself with wild flowers. After his death Coligny's very furniture was judged, and condemned to be destroyed; and in King Lear we have the bitter irony of the trial of the joint-stools.

The secondary characters of the play, considered as French people, easily fall into line with the principal one; Cordelia being the protestant Jeanne de Navarre (Jeanne d'Albret), mother of King Henry IV, whose position, relative to Catherine de Medicis, and her daughter-in-law, Marguerite de Valois, resembles closely that of Cordelia to Goneril and Regan, for whom the Medici pair stand,[2] and whose characters were seen through by Jeanne, just as those of Lear's elder daughters were by the youngest when she applied to them the

[1] p. 195.

[2] The anagrams of these names are striking: Goneril = Reginol (The Queen), very close to Regan; while Cordelia = Cor (Fi) delia comparable with Cor-ambis (double-hearted), the early form o Polonius.

typically Oxfordian phrase, "I know you what you are." The parallels, put forward by Miss Winstanley, are convincingly complete.[1]

Just as Coligny-Lear represents the genius of France, robbed of her glory and thrust forth, by the country's own factious people, naked and houseless, to destruction; so, in the person of Edgar, standing for Henry of Navarre—and, as in the play, overcoming his brother-rival, Guise, by force of arms—we have personified the fresh young spirit of France, reborn after the Peace of Vervins, in 1598—which, as we have seen, is the probable date of the play—and ready to stand, as Henry, indeed, was, historically, destined to stand, for the renewal of his native France, among whose few kingly benefactors—with the possible exception of Louis IX (St. Louis)—he is universally recognized as the foremost.[2]

If the above identifications be adjudged sound—and I do not see how they can be seriously questioned—it follows, that Albany is Charles IX and that Cornwall, his brother, and successor on the French throne, is Henry III, whom Oxford talked with, personally, at Paris, in 1575.

At this point I quote, from "Lear," I, 4, a passage full of important hints and ideas.

> FOOL (*to Kent*). Prithee, tell him so much the rent of his land comes to: he will not believe a fool.
>
> LEAR. A bitter fool!
>
> FOOL. Dost thou know the difference, my boy, between a bitter fool and a sweet fool?
>
> LEAR. No, lad, teach me.
>
> FOOL. The lord that counselled thee
>
> To give away thy land,
>
> Come place him here by me;
>
> Do thou for him stand.

[1] *Ibid.*, pp. 200-204.

[2] Miss Winstanley ingeniously observes that Edgar, coming, disguised as a peasant, to the rescue of Gloucester, speaks a peasant's language. Navarre was brought up as a peasant, among peasants, and spoke the southern dialect of his native Béarn.

The sweet and bitter fool
Will presently appear;
The one in motley here,
The other found out there.

LEAR. Dost thou call me fool, boy?

FOOL. All thy other titles thou hast given away; that thou wast born with.

KENT. This is not altogether fool, my lord.

FOOL. No, faith, lords and great men will not let me; if I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't: and ladies too, they will not let me have all the fool to myself; they'll be snatching.

Now Lear, as we have seen, is historically, for the most part, Coligny; but, in common with most of the other great Shakesperean characters, he is also, in part, Oxford as well, as seems to be hinted by his very name, which, though generally spelt Leir in the chronicles, becomes, in the tragedy, King Lear, which is an anagram for King Earl—the attendant fool being, like Touchstone, in "As You Like It," a shadow of his master, whom, by the way, he describes, in this scene, as "Lear's shadow."

Thus regarded, the fool's words to Kent—who, as I shall shew, in a moment, is Oxford himself, and who, at the opening of this same scene, has spoken, "in disguise," words of deep significance and meaning—concerning how much "the rent of his land comes to," followed by the song quoted above, with its further references to the giving away of land, and to a fool in motley, who will presently be "found out," are obviously, in direct line of descent from "As You Like It," with almost identical references to motley fools, rash disposal of lands, and concealed identity. Further, the fool's remark:—

> If I had a monopoly out, they would have part on't and ladies too . . . they'll be snatching.

becomes extremely interesting, when we remember that Oxford, in 1592, had applied formally, to the Queen, for the import monopoly on oils, woods, and fruits; and

on October 25, 1593, had written to Burleigh concerning the same suit, "made at Greenwich to Her Majesty at her last being there"; [1] that same royal visit being the one during which Nicholas Dawtrey, the prototype of Sir John Falstaff, received a warrant for £140 in return for "a little brief discourse upon Ireland." [2]

Snatches of song, and remarks by the fool, and others, in this scene of "Lear," teem with Oxford motives, of apishness, folly, mystery, madness, silence, and concealed identity: such as we have come already upon, again and again, in the course of these pages. Here are some of them.

FOOL. Wise men are grown foppish,
And know not how their wits to wear,
Their manners are so apish.

That such a king should play bo-peep,
And go the fools among.

Now thou art an O without a figure . . . thou art nothing . . . Mum, mum.

Out went the candle and we were left darkling. . .
GON. These dispositions that of late transform you
From what you rightly are. . .
LEAR. Who is it that can tell me who I am?
FOOL. Lear's Shadow.

All, who have read me thus far, will be able to interpret these cryptic lines for themselves; and we can now pass on to a very important link in our chain of evidence, identifying Oxford with "Shakespeare."

Miss Winstanley, so far as I have observed, suggests no French original for Kent; though, by way of Scottish prototype, she names Murray, who, purposing to do royal service, returns privately, in disguise, from banishment. Now I have already argued, in Chapter VII, that Oxford, "banished" from the court, was,

[1] Ward's "Oxford," pp. 308-311.
[2] "The Falstaff Saga," John Dawtrey, p. 87

nevertheless, still secretly working for, and being secretly, and lavishly, paid by, that court, when, withdrawn to Hackney, he wrote, among others, the play that we are here discussing: and long before becoming aware of Miss Winstanley's identification of Kent, as a man who did actually return from banishment, for the secret furtherance of his king's cause, I felt certain that Kent stood, in Shakespeare's mind, for Oxford himself, and no other—his own references to himself in the play, besides that to his age, which, as we have seen, exactly fits the other inferences, being expressed in just such an enigmatic, and deeply purposeful manner, as we found in another representative of Oxford—also dwelling in "banishment"—namely Jaques, in "As You Like It," with which play "Lear"—tragedy though it be—has many analogies, in addition to the fact that both dramas are, at bottom, set in France.[1] Here are some words spoken of, or by, Kent.

> LEAR. turn thy hated back
> Upon our kingdom. . . .
> KENT. Fare thee well, King: sith thus thou wilt appear
> Freedom lives hence, and banishment is here. (I, 1)—

beside which I set this, from "As You Like It" (I, 3), spoken, by Celia, to banished Rosalind:—

> Now go we in content
> To liberty and not to banishment.

Again

> GLOUC. . . . the noble and true-hearted Kent banished
> his offence, honesty! 'Tis strange! (I, 2.)

More significant still is this passage, opening the fourth scene of Act I.

[1] Miss Winstanley, without the Oxford clue to guide her, suggests that Orlando is, in part, Henry IV, a surmise with which I concur. See ante pp. 263, 264.

*A Hall in the Duke of Albany's Palace.*
*Enter Kent, disguised.*

KENT. If but as well I other accents borrow,
That can my speech defuse, my good intent
May carry through itself to that full issue,
For which I razed my likeness. Now, banish'd Kent,
If thou canst serve where thou dost stand condemn'd,
So may it come, thy master whom thou lovest
Shall find thee full of labours

These lines I believe to be nothing else than an expression, by Oxford, of the "good intent" with which, while "razing his likeness," he has set himself to carry through to its "full issue" his great national purpose in writing these plays. Rightly or wrongly, he may, for a time, "stand condemn'd," at the bar of popular opinion; but no matter! "Vero Nihil Verius" is his motto; and the Master, whom he loves—call him Truth, England, or Posterity, as old, and as royal, as Lear—shall find him "full of labours," in this eternal cause. Towards the fulfilment of that full issue, for which he wrote, these pages of mine are, I believe, one step, among many that shall follow from abler pens.

Let my readers compare these lines, of Kent's, with the corresponding lines by Jaques; and let them further compare Oxford's expressed desire (as quoted below) to serve, with Chapman's direct reference to Oxford personally, spoken by Clermont, the idealized Senecal Hamlet, in "The Revenge of Bussy," III, 4—

> And yet he (Oxford) cast it only in the way
> To stay and serve the world.[1]

The scene in Lear I, 4, continues, as follows:—

*Horns within. Enter Lear, Knights, and Attendants.*

LEAR. . . . How now! what art thou?
KENT. A man, sir.

[1] "Shakespeare and Chapman as Topical Dramatists," pp. 241-250.

LEAR. What dost thou profess? What would'st thou with us?

KENT. I do profess to be no less than I seem; to serve him truly that will put me in trust; to love him that is honest; to converse with him that is wise and says little; to fear judgment; to fight when I cannot choose[1] and to eat no fish.

LEAR. What art thou?

KENT. A very honest-hearted fellow, and as poor as the king.

LEAR. If thou be as poor for a subject as he is for a king, thou art poor enough. What would'st thou?

KENT. Service.

LEAR. Who would'st thou serve?

KENT. You.

LEAR. Dost thou know me, fellow?

KENT. No, sir; but you have that in your countenance which I would fain call master.

LEAR. What's that?

KENT. Authority.

LEAR. What services canst thou do?

KENT. I can keep honest counsel, ride, run, mar a curious tale in telling it, and deliver a plain message bluntly: that which ordinary men are fit for, I am qualified in, and the best is of me diligence.

LEAR. How old art thou?

KENT. Not so young, sir, to love a woman for singing, nor so old to dote on her for anything. I have years on my back forty-eight.

LEAR. Follow; thou shalt serve me.

When one has noted the significance of Lear's closing question, and of Kent's answer, that he is forty-eight[2]—the exact age of Oxford, in the year when this play was probably drafted—I see no other possible conclusion but the one that I have drawn.

Here are more words, by Kent.

[1] *Cf.* Touchstone (Oxford) in "As You Like It," V, 4—"I have had four quarrels, and like to have fought one." See ante p. 258

[2] *Cf.* Touchstone's question, in "As You Like It," V, 1, eliciting William's answer, that his age is twenty-five. See ante p. 260.

I *serve* the king,
On whose employment I was sent to you. (II, 2.)

'tis from Cordelia
Who hath most fortunately been inform'd
Of my *obscured course*. (II, 3.)

I am a gentleman of *blood and breeding*
And from some knowledge and assurance offer
This office to you. (III, 1.)

(*to "A Gentleman"*) some dear cause
Will in concealment wrap me up awhile;
When I am known aright, you shall not grieve
Lending me this acquaintance. I pray you go
Along with me. (IV, 3.)

Here we have further references to the "obscured course," or concealed identity; an assurance that Kent has birth and breeding behind him; and, lastly, a speech which, from the Oxonian view-point, is most remarkable; since it recalls, immediately, both in word and idea, the well-known appeal, made by Hamlet himself, to Horatio, concerning the "dear cause," as Kent has just phrased it, which, also, he would have "known aright."

Horatio, I am dead;
Thou livest; report me and my cause aright
To the unsatisfied.

These passages, read together, and set beside the other evidence, seem to shew, conclusively, that Kent and the Prince of Denmark, are, at bottom, one and the same man—namely Oxford; while, for further example of the motive underlying all such appeals, the Earl's aching desire for a sympathetic understanding by posterity—a desire here expressed in Kent's invitation, to his companion, to go "along with me"—I will point to that touching passage in "Hamlet," I, 5, wherein the Prince, echoed by the Ghost below, imposes upon Horatio and Marcellus another oath of secrecy:—

Never to speak of this that you have heard,
Swear by my sword :—

and then—after words of friendship, similar in meaning, though more gracious in phrase, than those which the less polished character, Kent, makes use of—concludes, with an arm for each of them, as they leave the stage :— " Nay, come, let's go together."

Thus it continues, with Kent, until the very end of the play ; for we find him, in IV, 7, saying to Cordelia :—

My boon I make it, that you know me not
Till time and I think meet :—

while immediately prior to the final curtain, brought down, on a modern stage, by Albany's speech :—

The weight of this sad time we must obey—

Kent, in response to the appeal addressed to Edgar and himself—

Friends of my soul, you twain
Rule in this realm, and the gored state sustain—[1]

utters this pronouncement, made the more cryptic by the fact that Lear, his late master, is dead :—

I have a journey, sir, shortly to go ;
My master calls me, I must not say no.[2]

What, precisely, Shakespeare's allusion here may be, I must not presume to say ; but it is possible that Oxford, finishing this sublime play not long before his own death —and conscious that the faithful fulfilment of his task has already assured him immortality—is acquiescing, more resignedly than at the close of the sonnets, or of " Hamlet," in the swiftly approaching end to his long, full labours, and in the transference of his cause to the final issue and judgment of posterity.

[1] Readers who accept the theory, advanced in these pages, that the plays were written, in part, at the instigation of a secret government committee, as national propaganda, during the Spanish War, will realize the significance of Albany's appeal to Kent (Oxford) to " sustain the state," gored by a Spanish bull.

[2] *Cf.* Kent, in I, 4—" Thy master whom thou lovest " (i.e. his own master, Lear).

## CHAPTER XII

### THE FOLIO AND A SUMMARY

It being essential, for economic and other reasons, that this book should be kept within moderate dimensions, I cannot, as I would, explore, from an Oxonian viewpoint, the more important of Shakespeare's historical and Roman plays, many of which will be found to throw much light upon our subject; but must regretfully leave them, to be dealt with in a later volume. One hint only I will give; of which the significance lies in Shakespeare's treatment in "Richard II," of his ancestor, Robert de Vere, Ninth Earl of Oxford, who was cousin by marriage to Richard himself. Mr. J. T. Looney writes:—[1]

> The character of this Robert, Earl of Oxford, of Richard's reign made it impossible to introduce him without either immortalizing his infamy or so altering the facts as to have betrayed the authorship. The silence of the author, at this point, is, therefore, even more significant than his utterances. . . . Shakespeare, whoever he was, had evidently some special reason for screening the Earl of Oxford.

Nor has Mr. Looney overlooked the deep significance of another parallel fact; namely that, in the First Folio edition of the play, the name of Oxford, as having been executed for supporting the king, is replaced by that of Spenser. Obviously, therefore, the editors of that Folio were determined to keep their secret; a remark that leads me naturally for a few moments, to that much discussed first edition of Shakespeare.

[1] "Shakespeare Identified," pp. 221-222.

That the Folio teems with mysteries, will, I think, be admitted by most open-minded people. The preliminaries certainly contain words—of which "Sweet swan of Avon" are the most important—apparently identifying the plays with the actor of Stratford; but against that evidence must be set many other facts and inferences, pointing in an opposite direction, including the absence, from the Folio preliminaries, of any mention of the Stratford man's executors, or of a single member of his family, among the ten names that appear in connection with the publication. Add to these the enigmatic portrait, or mask, faced by the no less mysterious verses, concerning "the figure," which, ever since, as a boy, I first read them, seemed to me, indubitably, to bear a second meaning, and which, it seems, probably contain two Baconian cipher signatures; thus recalling, in this respect, the dedicatory page of the sonnets.[1] Add the further fact, made perfectly clear by Col. Ward,[2] that Elizabeth de Vere, Countess of Derby, Oxford's daughter, was, very possibly, connected with the Folio, through her husband, who, as we know, "took delight" in the players, and penned comedies for them; that her sister, Susan, certainly links with the Folio, since she married the Earl of Montgomery, one of the "Incomparable Paire," to whom the work is dedicated; while the third sister, Bridgett, was, at one time, practically engaged to be married to the elder of those brethren, William Herbert, Earl of Pembroke. Altogether, as Col. Ward remarks, the First Folio group appears to be something of a family party; since, of the ten names mentioned in its title-page and introduction, more than half seem to be closely connected either with Edward de Vere, or with one of his daughters; among that group being Ben Jonson, in whose masques Susan de Vere had played at court, and to whom Jonson had addressed an epigram, which reads, in part, as follows.[3]

[1] "The Self-named William Shakespeare," by Alfred Mudie, p. 72.
[2] "The Mystery of Mr. W. H.," cap. III. [3] *Ibid*, pp. 54-61.

TO SUSAN, COUNTESS OF MONTGOMERY

Or, because some scarce think that story true
To make those faithful did the Fates send you?
And to your scene lent no less dignity
Of birth, of match, of form, of chastity?
Or, more than born *for the comparison*
*Of former age*, or glory of your own
Were you advancèd past those times to be
The light and mark unto Posterity?
Judge they that can: Here I have raised to show
*A picture, which the world for yours must know;*
*And like it too; if they look equally;*
If not, 'tis fit for you, some should envy.

Extremely significant are the italicized lines in that passage; for not only do they connect up very closely with Jonson's lines, "To the memory of my beloved, the Author":—

Leave thee alone, *for the comparison*
Of all, that *insolent Greece*, or *haughtie Rome*
Sent forth, or since did from their ashes come.
Triumph, my Britain, thou hast one to show,
*To whom all scenes of Europe homage owe*—[1]

but they connect also, no less meaningfully, and naturally, with the lines in Stanza X of Chapman's "Coronet for His Mistress Philosophy," which, in Chapter V, we have seen to be aimed, by the rival poet of the sonnets, at Oxford-Shakespeare, echoing Greene's attack upon Shake-scene, as "beautified with our feathers," and referring, likewise, to the theatres of Athens and of Rome.[2] For convenience, I requote that stanza.

Muses that Fames loose feathers beautify,
And such as scorn to tread the theatre,
As ignorant, the seed of memory
Have most inspired, and shewn their glories there

[1] Note how this couplet bears out the theory argued in these pages, that scenes and characters of the plays are taken from contemporary history in the various capitals of Europe.

[2] See ante pp. 119–126.

To noblest wits, and men of highest doom,
That for the kingly laurel bent affair
The theatres of Athens and of Rome,
Have been the crowns, and not the base impair.
Far, then, be this foul cloudy-browed contempt
From like plum'd birds : and let your sacred rhymes
From honour's court their servile feet exempt,
That live by soothing moods and serving times.
And let my love adorn with modest eyes,
Muses that sing Love's sensual emperies.

Here, then, we have writings, by Greene, in " A Groats-worth of Wit," by Chapman, in " A Coronet for His Mistress Philosophy," and by Jonson, in the First Folio, all aiming at Shakespeare, in similarly overlapping phraseology, and, in the first instance, linking up the attack with words unmistakably aimed at Oxford.

The comparisons, however, do not end here; for the following lines from Jonson's epigram to Susan de Vere :—

Here I have raised to show
A picture which the world for yours must know ;
And like it too. . . .

seem to be very curiously echoed in Jonson's lines in the Folio, facing the Droeshout portrait engraving; concerning

" The Figure that thou here seest put."

Again, if, as some hold, the poet " Ignoto " was really Oxford ; then his couplet, eulogizing Spenser :—

I here pronounce his workmanship is such
As that no pen can set it forth too much

may well have been present to Jonson's mind, when he wrote, in the Folio, to Shakespeare himself :—

While I confess thy writings to be such
As neither man nor muse can praise too much.

The analogies, however, go deeper yet ; for if the reader will compare these lines, admittedly from Jonson's pen, and addressed to de Vere's eldest daughter :—

Here I have raised to show
A picture, which the world for yours must know;
And like it too; if they look equally—

with these lines, also by Jonson, and written, as this book has sought to show, about de Vere himself:—

O, could he but have drawne his wit
As well in brasse as he hath hit
His Face; the Print would then surpasse
All, that was ever writ in brasse.
But, since he cannot, Reader, looke,
Not on his picture, but his Booke—

there becomes apparent a very remarkable and instructive antithesis: for, in the epigram to the daughter, Jonson declares that the word-picture he has drawn of her will be recognizable to all who "look equally"; whereas, when, with the same lines, quite evidently, in mind, he is writing about the father, there is no longer question of "looking equally." On the contrary—as I interpret the passage—Jonson openly warns the reader against "looking equally," suggesting, instead, that, "If you want the truth about my beloved the author, you had best look, not upon his picture, which is no more than a mask, but upon his book, which contains and speaks the truth."

It would be difficult to exaggerate the significance of so clearly related a group of literary coincidences, all pointing the same way; but, while admitting their relevance to the Oxford theory of authorship, some reader may be asking me, nevertheless, why it is that Jonson and Digges, alike, by direct reference, the one to the river Avon, and the other to the Stratford Monument, suggest the validity of the orthodox view.

I answer that Jonson was writing under orders which he dare not disobey; and that Digges also, it seems, was more prudent than truthful in this matter: and I will complete my answer, by concluding this chapter, and, with it, this book, upon a very brief epitome of the whole mysterious story, as I see it.

Edward de Vere, at twelve years of age, inherits the proudest and most ancient earldom in the land; and with it the privileges pertaining to the exalted office of Lord Great Chamberlain of England. With such an ancestry behind him, and the deeds, and prowess, of many progenitors haunting his dreams, from boyhood, the youth's natural love of history and of letters—first seriously developed, I suppose, under the tutorship of his uncle, and friend, Arthur Golding—is deepened by every circumstance, and setting, of his life; the inherent love of poetry, also, that soon begins to clamour within him for expression being sustained, and heightened, by the consciousness that when, in due course, he becomes a writer of verse, he is absorbing the influence, and following the example, of another uncle, Lord Surrey, and of that charming group of pioneer court-poets that includes the Lords Buckhurst and Vaux.

The art of poetry, however, is held in no high esteem at the Elizabethan court; and though many noblemen practise it, they do so, in most cases, anonymously, or under the shield of such a "posy" as Sir Christopher Hatton's "Si Fortunatus Infœlix," or Oxford's own "Meritum Petere Grave."[1] Ordinarily, to these prentice efforts, the Earl will sign no name; sometimes he will add his initials, "E. O.," to a set of crude and immature verses, the themes, ideas, and vocabulary of which he will use as quarrying ground, weaving all these, with ever increasing skill, into the earlier lyrical poems, and plays, that, like the verses which suggested them, express, in the main, the deepest subjective experiences of his own deeply impressionable and sympathetic nature. Throughout the early and mid-seventies, he writes, it may be, little else than short lyrical pieces; but though, during that decade, the personal and political ambitions, and the ecstacies, and miseries, of sex attraction, inevitable in an intensely alive and vivid young

[1] B. M. Ward's edition of "A Hundreth Sundrie Flowres," pp. 63-81.

courtier of outstanding genius—even for that gifted age—were still dominant over, or were hindering, the man of letters. The young Earl, now in his twenties, and struck, from boyhood, by the suggestive inspiration, and imagined possibilities of the increasingly popular stage plays—that, before the end of the decade, have established themselves at Burbage's, and the Curtain playhouses—is beginning, already, to think in terms of the theatre, and to conceive in stage-scenes, and dramatic pictures, made musical by golden verse, and merry with comic interlude, some of the most poignant episodes of his own ever-deepening experience, linked together with thrilling events, and dominant personalities, drawn from the great world about him. From whatever his ranging eye may see, from whatever his teeming fancy may chance upon, abounding hints and suggestions come. When, with the shadowy outlines of "King Lear" already hovering in his mind, he has been reading his uncle Golding's "Life of Jasper Coligny," he finds dramatic suggestion in Lord Ferrers' explanation, made, in the last pages, to Navarre and Condé, that the terrible event, the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, from which the last-named pair had succeeded in escaping alive, was "the first pageant of some tragedie whereby the rest would follow soon after." [1]

What was his first prentice attempt at a historical play, we do not certainly know; but Capt. Ward, in his article in "The Review of English Studies," for July, 1928, makes out a very good case for the supposition that the crude historical play, "The Famous Victories of Henry V," was actually written by Oxford, and, perhaps, played before the queen at court, at Christmas, 1574.[2] It is a drama which, in defiance of historical fact, writes up the achievements of Oxford's ancestor, the Eleventh Earl, at the Battle of Agincourt.

[1] The book was published in 1576, four years after the massacre. First draft of the play seems to have been 1598. See ante pp. 355–356.

[2] Ward's "Oxford," p. 97.

By the 'eighties, Oxford is probably at work upon the first draft of some of the early plays, and before 1590 he has permanently retired from a court in which, for reasons that we cannot wholly fathom, some shadow of disgrace—in part, perhaps, deserved, and, in part, slanderous and unmerited, and, for the rest, imagined—hovered continuously about his name. He has withdrawn to private life at Hackney, where, as we saw in Chapter VII, he is working, at full pressure, apparently—with Bacon, it seems, as his editor-in-chief—as the principal dramatist of a secret committee commissioned, by the Government, to supply propagandist national plays, for the encouragement, and amusement, of the populace, during the long and exhausting war with Spain—a task remunerated, in Oxford's case, with the then unprecedented salary of £1,000 per annum. These plays of his—so far as their construction is concerned—are an extraordinary jumble of personal incident and reference to episodes from contemporary history, and are written, at first, anonymously, but, later, under the adopted pseudonym "William Shakespeare," a name which first appears, in English literature, below the dedication of "Venus and Adonis," in 1593.

Before the close of the 'eighties, however, there has been emerging into the picture another claimant—if I may so phrase it—to the name, and fame, of Shakespeare, in the person of the actor of Stratford-on-Avon; my basis for that assertion being the opening scene of the fifth act of "As You Like It," analyzed in Chapter IX, wherein, as I read the dialogue, it is definitely asserted that William, "born in the forest," but now a resident of London, for some years past, at the ripe age of twenty-five years has been laying, in 1589, unauthorized claim to the plays. Touchstone's accusation, and threats, however, are, as I pointed out, humorously, rather than maliciously, made; as also are the remarks of Evans in the corresponding scene from "Merry Wives," from which facts I draw the general interference, that Oxford,

and, perhaps, other sharers in the secret, were aware of, and may have secretly connived at, the actor's claim to be "ipse," the rising dramatist, whose identity was already a matter of much debate and discussion among the literary coteries of Elizabethan London.

Upon such nice points, of course, one can do no more than make intelligent surmises; and although Touchstone speaks of William as a clown, and clearly depicts him as a person of mediocre intelligence, allowance must be made for the deliberate exaggeration of Shakespeare's comedy scenes, in the interest of popular stage presentation; as instanced, for example, by Polonius, grotesquely caricatured from the not wholly foolish original, Lord Burleigh.

That "Shaxper,"[1] though incapable, it would seem, of any piece of elaborate writing, was, in actual life, a highly intelligent person, would seem to be a certain fact; since no mere "clown" could carry off, for a week, the imposture, for which, if I have read "As You Like It," aright, he was, in part, if not wholly, responsible; and it seems further self-evident, that a man who could acquire a share in the Globe Theatre, large enough to enable him, from the proceeds—with, perhaps, a little money-lending thrown in—to build, and to maintain, New Place at Stratford-on-Avon, must, quite evidently, have been a shrewd man of business. But, convinced as I am, upon that point, it seems no less certain, upon the evidence of his hand-writing alone, that the Warwickshire man was no skilled pen-man; though I should not be prepared to deny that, as a trained actor, and man of the theatre, he was well able, and did, very probably, render to Oxford considerable service, with practical advice upon the construction of plays and scenes, even

[1] Alfred Mudie, on p. 24 of "The Self-named William Shakespeare," points out that there had not been found any member of the Stratford family who wrote his name "Shakespeare" or "Shakspeare." "The most frequent family spelling was with "x" for "cks." Several writers have deliberately altered the spellings to "Shakespeare," thus creating a wrong impression.

to the provision of material, and dialogue, for some of the clown characters, and comic episodes. In that case, no doubt, some portion, great or small, of Oxford's £1,000 a year, jingled annually in the pockets of the man of Stratford.

That contemporary debate, discussion, and honest doubt, hovered continuously about the vexed problem of actual authorship of the plays—with Bacon, even then—as, indeed, he still is—occasionally in the running—there can, in my judgment, be little doubt; but Touchstone's words, to William, in the scene from "As You Like It":—

> All your *writers* do consent that ipse is he:
> Now you are not ipse, for I am he—

provide, I suggest, proof positive that contemporary men-of-letters generally knew the truth; and that Greene, Harvey, Chapman, Jonson, Bacon, and Davies of Hereford, to name no others, had no illusions as to the actual authorship; while perfectly conscious that they were, and must remain, "tongue-tied by authority"—an authority so powerful as to command a most implicit obedience upon pain of severe penalties. Hence the many carefully veiled, subtly worded, yet, nevertheless, often daring contemporary allusions, to some of which I have already referred. Let me add this, from those "Marginalia" of Gabriel Harvey, concerning "Axiophilus"—otherwise, as I firmly believe, Shakespeare—whom that same Gabriel, in earlier years, had mocked at, and derided, as "The Mirrour of Tuscany."

> For *I dare not name* the Honorabler Sonnes and Nobler Daughters of the sweetest and divinest Muses that ever sang in English or other language: and their own most delectable and delicious Exercises . . . speak incomparably more than I am briefly to insinuate.[1]

That "I dare not" is my explanation of Jonson's "Sweet Swan of Avon," and other kindred references appearing in official introductions to the Folio.

[1] "Axiophilus," by Mrs. Eva Clark, p. 32.

Upon one other point, of great inferential importance, I must touch; and that is the intensely significant connection traceable between those Shakesperean plays in which Oxford's personality, and Oxfordian incidents and ciphers, are most prominently introduced, and their appearance, or non-appearance, in print.

Which are the most personal of the Shakesperean plays, as analyzed in this book? Surely, among the comedies, "Two Gentlemen of Verona," "As You Like It," "Much Ado About Nothing," "The Merry Wives of Windsor," "All's Well that Ends Well," and "Measure for Measure." Among the tragedies, "Romeo and Juliet," "Hamlet," "Othello," and "King Lear." Is it not, then, intensely significant to note that, of the comedies named above, not one was printed before the Folio of 1623 with the single exception of "Merry Wives," which appeared in quarto in 1602, minus the revealing William scene, and containing only about one half of the text of the Folio version. Sir Israel Gollancz writes of the Folio version of "Merry Wives,"[1] that "it differs to such an extent (from the Quarto) as to give the impression of being a revised and expanded version of a mere garbled and pirated sketch." None of the more personal comedies, then, were authoritatively published until 1623, nineteen years after their author's death! Further, in the case of "All's Well," and "Measure for Measure," the two most intimately autobiographical of all the comedies, we possess, concerning the first named, no record of any performance, even, before the middle of the 18th century; nor can we be certain from any authentic document that the second of them, "Measure for Measure," was once played before the Restoration! Could any more profoundly meaningful, or pointed, series of facts be adduced, in support of the Oxfordian thesis?

Turning, now, to the personal, and autobiographical, tragedies—as I hold them to be—what do we find in

[1] Preface to Temple Shakespeare edition.

corroboration? "Romeo and Juliet" is so intensely personal a play, that I should not have expected to see it in print before the Folio. Strangely enough, however, it was published, though anonymously, in quarto form, in 1597 and again in 1599;[1] no author's name appearing until a reprint of the 3rd quarto of 1609 revealed, upon certain copies only, the secret—"W. Shakespeare." "Hamlet," in all probability, would never have been printed, within its author's life-time, but for the pirated version of 1603, which seems to have compelled the secret editor—who was, probably, Bacon—to publish the full text, in 1605. "Othello," a very autobiographical play, did not appear until 1622, one year before the Folio; the Quarto being, apparently, from a playhouse copy, differing considerably from the manuscript that was used for the Folio edition. "Much Ado," less intimately personal than the others, appeared in quarto in 1600; but not again until the Folio; and "King Lear," one of the most pointedly individual, and intimate, of them all, was first seen in print in 1608, during that second period of Shakesperean publication (1608–9), which included "Troilus," "Pericles," and "The Sonnets," and which coincided, as we have seen, with the departure of the widowed Countess of Oxford from Brooke House.

All these facts, viewed together, constitute, in the large, a chain of irrefutable evidence of the first importance to our case. Considered from that standpoint, every appearance of the plays in print, excepting, perhaps, the anonymous "Romeo and Juliet," fits naturally into the circumstances; but if you suppose the Stratford actor, who lived until 1616, to be the actual author of the plays, the story of these publications becomes a meaningless chaos of inexplicable events.

By the early fifteen-nineties—to take up again the

[1] I have already suggested that Elizabeth's age, and her immersion in cares of state, at that time, may have made Oxford more daring in this respect, than he would have been ten years before.

threads of our story—the great Elizabethan mystery was fast developing. Oxford, in retirement at Hackney, was at work upon "Love's Labour's Lost," and other early plays. In 1591, having married Elizabeth Trentham, he proceeds to put her, as Juliet, into his first tragedy, reserving for his later tragedies, particularly "Hamlet" and "Othello," many an episode from his earlier marriage. Thenceforward, until his death, he continues, unflaggingly, to exert the full powers of his maturing genius upon the sonnets, and the later plays; still determined, as we have seen, to retain his incognito; but equally resolute, whether in sonnet or drama, to weave into his text, for purposes of subsequent identification, a long sequence of family, and autobiographical, reminiscences; and by cunning word-play, to provide a continuous stream of punning allusions to his own name, and of cryptic, symbolical phrases, culminating in those of Kent, in "King Lear," announcing his intention—by reason of that "wounded name," and of those darkening shames, which, whether in truth or in imagination, or in both, have shadowed his later days—to remain, during life, impenetrably hidden within his works, by "an artificial night," [1] of his own making; yet announcing, in play after play, his sure and certain hope, that, by the very promise of his family motto, "Verité Vient," [2] truth shall triumph in the end; and that, although

> some dear cause
> Will in concealment wrap me up awhile,
> When I am known aright, you shall not grieve
> Lending me this acquaintance. . . .
> My boon I make it, that you know me not
> Till time and I think meet.

Time now, at last, "in Time's grey fashion," has though meet; and towards the truth of this matter, to which,

[1] "Romeo and Juliet," I, 1. Spoken of Romeo.

[2] Professor Connes tells me that the best equivalent for "Vérité Vient," in modern French, is "La Vérité est en marche."

since the world-war, Mr. Looney, Capt. Holland,[1] Col. and Capt. Ward, and others, have all, in their turns, so valuably contributed, I now put forward these pages, to the memory of our greatest man-of-letters, transformed, henceforth, as we believe, from a legendary figure, into a man of flesh and blood, who, it seems, through many sins, and much suffering, survived to devote the best years of his life to the service of mankind; bequeathing, at last, to posterity, in fulfilment of that intention, these writings, the secret meaning, and interpretation, of which I have sought here, in part, to set down.

[1] Now Admiral Holland.

## APPENDIX—Queen Elizabeth and National Defence

*Note.*—The figures are in thousands of pounds

| Year | Revenue | Field Army | | | Total Field Army | Royal Navy | Total National Defence | Per Cent of Revenue |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Ireland | Low Countries | Ordnance | | | | |
| 1584 | 202 | 42 | — | 11 | 53 | 13 | 66 | 33% |
| 1585 | 242 | 35 | 47 | 8 | 90 | 17 | 107 | 44% |
| 1586 | 295 | 47 | 68 | 7 | 122 | 29 | 151 | 51% |
| 1587 | 267 | 28 | 140 | 11 | 179 | 75 | 254 | 95% |
| 1588 | 311 | 32 | 132 | 18 | 182 | 132 | 314 | 101% |
| 1589 | 349 | 20 | 133 | 26 | 179 | 65 | 244 | 69% |
| 1590 | 360 | 37 | 54 | 24 | 115 | 64 | 179 | 50% |
| 1591 | 319 | 20 | 169 | 13 | 202 | 51 | 253 | 80% |
| 1592 | 375 | 24 | 138 | 9 | 171 | 37 | 208 | 55% |
| 1593 | 381 | 16 | 138 | 11 | 165 | 35 | 200 | 53% |
| 1594 | 433 | 45 | 155 | 13 | 213 | 55 | 268 | 62% |
| 1595 | 415 | 56 | 75 | 12 | 143 | 52 | 195 | 47% |
| 1596 | 381 | 80 | 81 | 33 | 194 | 139 | 333 | 87% |
| 1597 | 371 | 92 | 66 | 18 | 176 | 150 | 326 | 88% |
| 1598 | 431 | 155 | 61 | 13 | 229 | 75 | 304 | 71% |
| 1599 | 590 | 284 | 41 | 27 | 352 | 111 | 463 | 78% |
| 1600 | 1,000 | 624 | 54 | 38 | 716 | 152 | 868 | 87% |
| 1601 | | | | | | | | |
| 1602 | 499 | 210 | 23 | 19 | 252 | 109 | 361 | 72% |
| Total 1586 to 1602 | 6,777 | 1,770 | 1,528 | 292 | 3,590 | 1,331 | 4,921 | 72% |

1. *The Revenue figures* are derived from the "Revenue Day Books" kept by Chidiock Wardour, Chief Clerk of the Exchequer of Receipt (P.R.O. E.401/11835 to 1871). Each volume deals with a period of six months; only one volume—that for April-October, 1602—being missing. We may take it as certain that the figures are complete, and that all sources of Revenue are included—e.g., Taxation, Fines, Loans, Sale of Crown Lands, etc.

2. *The Expenditure figures* are derived from three series of volumes kept by the four Tellers (or Cashiers) of the Exchequer:

(*a*) "Tellers' views of payments" (P.R.O. E.403/2270 to 2284). This series contains full details of every individual payment made by the Exchequer. Each entry gives the following information: name of payee; purpose of payment; date of Privy Seal Warrant authorizing payment; amount of payment; date of receipt given by payee; name of Teller (or Cashier) who actually made the payment.

(*b*) "Abstracts of Tellers' views of payments" (P.R.O. E.405/438 to 445). These contain the same information as series (*a*), but without details, and in a summarized form only.

(*c*) "Departmental Payment Books" (P.R.O. E.403/2426 to 2429). This series is sub-headed into all the Departments of State; and gives the annual payments made by the Exchequer to each Department.

None of these three series are complete in themselves; but the only gap in all three is the period September, 1600, to September, 1601. In my table, therefore, I have given one set of figures for the 24 *months* from January 1st, 1600, to December 31st, 1601. The Revenue—£1,000,000—is accurate. The Expenditure has been obtained by doubling the figures for the two periods, January 1st to September 29th, 1600, and September 29th, 1601, to December 31st, 1601. The figures for these two periods are exact, and represent 12 *months* expenditure during the 24 *months* comprised in the years

1600 and 1601. The result is probably near enough for all practical purposes. It is important to add that these Expenditure figures represent money *actually paid* in hard cash, because against each entry is written the date of the receipt given to the Exchequer by the payee concerned. This is important, because it precludes any possibility of the figures containing sums of money which were *promised* but not sent.

3. *The War with Spain* broke out in August, 1585, and peace was signed in 1604. Queen Elizabeth died in March, 1603. If we consider the National finances, from 1st January, 1586, to 31st December, 1602, we get some rather interesting results :

(*a*) *The Revenue* for these 17 years was £6,777,000.

(*b*) *The Expenditure on the Navy and Field Army alone* during the same period was £4,763,000.

(*c*) The difference between these two is £2,015,000 ; or an average of £118,530 per annum. Out of this sum Elizabeth had to repay her loans, pay the expenses of Court and Household, all civilian officials' salaries, annuities and pensions, Office of Works, ambassadors, etc. Besides this there were other items which are really National Defence, but which I have not included in my table, e.g. Garrison of the Scottish Border, Garrison at the Tower, Garrisons of Defended Ports, and the shipbuilding subsidy of 5s. per ton to encourage shipbuilding in England. This gives one some idea of the importance Elizabeth must have attached to Lord Oxford's £1,000 a year !

# ADDITIONAL NOTES

pp. 115, 116. OXFORD AS THE FRANCO-ITALIANATE ENGLISHMAN.

In "The Courtier," set at the Italian court of Urbino, and done into English by Sir Thomas Hoby in 1561, Castiglione, its author, when making comparison between Italian manners, and those of other countries, refers, almost exclusively, to the courts of France and Spain, mentioning England only occasionally. In the light of these facts, the deep impression made, by Italy and France, upon Oxford, becomes more easily comprehensible. The Earl was delighted with "The Courtier," and, in 1571, wrote an appreciative and enthusiastic preface to Bartholomew Clerke's translation of it into Latin.

p. 176. BEARING THE CANOPY. *Cf.* "Coriolanus," IV, 5.

THIRD SERV. (*to Coriolanus, disguised*). Where dwell's thou?
CORIO. Under the canopy.
THIRD SERV. Under the canopy!
CORIO. Ay.
THIRD SERV. Where's that?
CORIO. I' the city of kites and crows.

p. 191. SONNET 114/36.

I may not evermore acknowledge thee,
Lest my bewailed guilt should do thee shame

*Cf.* "Wit's Recreation," anonymous, 1640: Epigram "to Mr." William Shake-speare.

Shake-speare, we must be silent in our praise,
'Cause our encomiums will but blast thy bays,
Which envy could not.

p. 192. SONNET 118/111.

my nature is subdued
To what it works in, like a dyer's hand.

The idea that the reputation of the humble immigrant to London, from Stratford, could be stained "like a dyer's hand," by acting in great plays, of his own composition, is, in my judgment, utterly absurd. Applied to Oxford, the comparison becomes a natural one.

## "TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA"

p. 223. "Some to discover islands far away." *Cf.* Oxford's interest in the discovery of the north-west passage, etc. See Ward's "Oxford," pp. 236–243.

p. 224. Oxford left England, for Flanders, without permission, in the summer of 1574, thereby arousing rumours that he had joined the queen's enemies. Bedingfield was sent to bring him back, and, during August, Burleigh wrote an appeal to Walsingham, on behalf of his son-in-law, of which the wording closely recalls the scene with the brigands in "Two Gentlemen," IV, 1.

> Her Majesty's enemies and rebels which sought by many devices to stay him from returning . . . this young nobleman being of such a quality as he is for birth, office, and other notable valours of body and spirit. (Ward's "Oxford," p. 96.)

The passage in "Two Gentlemen of Verona" IV, 1, is as follows:—

THIRD OUT. some of us are gentlemen
Such as the fury of ungovern'd youth
Thrust from the company of awful men.

FIRST OUT (*to Valentine*). Seeing you are beautified
With goodly shape, and by your own report
A linguist, and a man of such perfection
As we do in our quality much want.

## "AS YOU LIKE IT"

pp. 257–263. Note that the name Audrey, standing for the plays, is roughly an anagram for de Vere—Da Very, or De Vary. The case here made out against "William" tallies exactly with the attack upon the Stratford actor, as "Sogliardo," spoken by Carlo Buffone in IV, 6, of Jonson's "Every Man Out of His Humour"—"Faith, gallants, I am persuading this gentleman," etc. See post, note to "Romeo and Juliet."

Col. Ward points out to me that the name, "William Shakespeare," appearing, it seems, for the first time, correctly spelt, in an official document, and applied to the Stratford actor, in the Licence to the players, granted by Privy Seal Warrant, in May, 1603, when Oxford—as argued in cap. VII of this book—was chief of the Government Propaganda Department, seems to bear out my contention that Oxford, from 1589, deliberately allowed the actor to take upon himself the authorship of the plays.

## "TWELFTH NIGHT" AND "HAMLET"

In view of Oxford's deep interest in Italy, and in the Medici family, it is interesting to read, in the autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini (Everyman edn., p. 157), "Signior Gierolimo Orsino, father of Signior Paolo, and son-in-law of our Duke Cosimo" (i.e. Cosimo de Medici, Duke of Florence).

273. Philip Sidney, being, probably, the historic original of Aguecheek, it is an interesting suggestion that the duel in "Twelfth Night" was connected,

in Oxford's mind, with the quarrel with Sidney in the tennis-court, concerning which Fulke Greville wrote as follows :—

> "The queen who saw that by the loss or disgrace of either (she) could gain nothing, presently undertakes Sir Philip, and (like an excellent monarch) lays before him the difference in degree between Earls and Gentlemen, the respect inferiors ought to their superiors, and the necessity in Princes to maintain their own creations, as degrees descending between the people's licentiousness and the anointed sovereignty of crowns ; how the Gentleman's neglect of the Nobility taught the peasant to insult both."

Capt. Holland, in "Shakespeare Through Oxford Glasses," has pointed out the parallel with "Hamlet," V, 1.

> "This three years I have taken note of it ; the age is grown so picked that the toe of the peasant comes so near the heel of the courtier, he galls his kibe."

The quarrel between the rivals took place in 1579, which, adding the three years mentioned by Hamlet, gives 1583 as the date of the tragedy. Other references point to the early fifteen-eighties as the time of first drafting of the play.

p. 275 (*note*). Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst (Sir Toby Belch) wrote, as also did Oxford, a prefatory letter to Bartholomew Clerke's Latin translation of Castiglione's "The Courtier" (1571), and signed it "Tho. Buckhurst." Note how the first four letters of the signature—Tho. B.—spell "Toby."

## "MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING"

p. 281. OXFORD AND DON JOHN.

Bernardino de Mendoza, the Spanish Ambassador, wrote, in 1578,

He (Oxford) is a lad who has a great following in the country, and has requested permission to go and serve His Highness.

Capt. B. M. Ward, in his "Life of Oxford," writes (p. 162):—

"His Highness" was Don John of Austria, the half-brother of the King of Spain. He is chiefly remembered for his celebrated sea-victory over the Turks at Lepanto in 1571. The memory of Lepanto and Don John would have been very fresh in Venice, when Oxford was there in 1575. Venice was the great Naval Base of the Christian fleets in the Mediterranean, and the Republic had provided the majority of the ships comprising the Allied Navy at the Battle.

*Cf.* Philantia, speaking of Amorphous (Oxford) in Jonson's "Cynthia's Revels" IV, 1, "O, fie on him, he looks like a Venetian trumpeter in the Battle of Lepanto in the gallery yonder."

p. 284. "Than when she (Hero) lived indeed."

It was natural that the unappreciated charm of Oxford's neglected, and injured, first wife, should be most vividly realized by him when he had lost her, by death.

## "ROMEO AND JULIET" AND "EVERY MAN OUT OF HIS HUMOUR"

p. 301. ROMEO AND JULIET AS LORD OXFORD AND ELIZABETH TRENTHAM.

Since this book was in print, a further examination of Jonson's "Every Man Out of His Humour" has produced important confirmatory results. I am now satisfied that, in this satire, Jonson not only aims at "Twelfth Night," as I shewed in my "Shakespeare, Jonson and Wilkins as Borrowers," but also that, in II, 1, he parodies the balcony-scene in "Romeo and Juliet," with Oxford as Puntarvolo, and Eliza-

beth Trentham as the Gentlewoman, and further burlesques Oxford's own stage performance, as Romeo, in his own play, which Jonson, apparently, had seen acted, as also he had "Twelfth Night." All this was unknown to me, when I first argued that Romeo, and other Shakespearean leads, were probably played, on occasion, by Oxford himself. Saviolina in "E.M.O." is Queen Elizabeth, and Sogliardo is the Stratford actor, whose coat-of-arms is significantly described, by Sogliardo himself, as "Your (Puntarvolo Oxford's) boar without a head," and is jeered at by Puntarvolo, as "the most vile (etc.) escutcheon that ever this eye survised." From this view-point, "Cynthia's Revels" is about equally important. I will deal with these interesting matters, at length, in my second book upon the Oxford theory of authorship, upon which I am already at work.

## "KING LEAR"

p. 345. KING LEAR AND HIS THREE DAUGHTERS.

Seeing that the name, "King Lear," can be anagrammed "King Earl," and that Oxford had three daughters, with whom, almost certainly, he was not always on the best of terms, and to whom, with Lord Burleigh added, on December 2, 1591, he alienated Castle Hedingham, the ancestral home of the de Veres, I opine that "King Lear," in common with other plays, is vaguely autobiographic, even outside the principal Oxford character, Kent. *Cf.* the words of the Fool, who describes himself as "Lear's Shadow"—

> If I had a monopoly out they (lords and great men) would have part on't, and ladies too . . . they'll be snatching. (I, 4.)

Oxford had applied unsuccessfully, in 1593, for the import monopoly of oils, wools, and fruits. See Ward's "Oxford," pp. 308–310.

# INDEX


A

Abbot, George (Dean of Winchester), 276
Acheson, Arthur, 97, 104 (*note*), 136, 170
Agincourt, Battle of, 375
Alençon, Duke of, 49, 56, 114, 115 (*note*), 118, 129, 220, 227, 228, 235, 240, 241, 264, 272, 274, 278, 279, 302, 350
"All's Well That Ends Well," *see* Shakespeare, William
Amlodi (Hamlet), 90
Anjou, Margaret of, 123, 131
"Anthony and Cleopatra," *see* Shakespeare, William
Antioch, 183
Apollo, Song to, 64
Ardennes, 257, 260
Armada, Spanish, 141, 168, 176, 184, 203, 204, 324, 328
Arundel, Charles, 145 (*note*), 177 (*note*), 264, 265, 312, 351
Arundel, Philip, Earl of, 145
"As You Like It," *see* Shakespeare, William
Auxerre, 354
Axiophilus, 357, 358, 359, 378

B

Bacchus, Song to, 51, 52, 55, 57
Bacon, Delia, 1
Bacon, Francis, 1, 88, 147, 155 (*note*), 157 (*note*), 165, 170, 187, 210, 216, 264 (*note*), 370, 376, 380
Baconian theories, 2, 6, 88, 89, 125 (*note*), 147–9, 216
Bartas, Seigneur, du, 358, 359
Barton-on-Heath, 244 (*note*), 245
Bath, 197
Bayley, Harold, 193 (*note*), 202, 203, 209
Bayonne, 352
Béarn, 361 (*note*)
Bedingfield, Thomas, 24; Oxford's letter to, 25–9
Begley, Walter, 126
Benson, John, 151, 152
Beauchamp, Lord, 239, 241
Belleforest, 331
Bertie, Peregrine (Lord Willoughby de Eresby), 328
Biron, 221, 246
Bianchi, The, 319
Blackfriars Theatre, 48
Boleyn, Anne, 275
Bond, R. Warwick, 49
Bosworth Field, Battle of, 124, 184
Bothwell, Lord, the elder, 331, 334, 337, 338, 339, 347
Bothwell, Francis, the younger, 339, 340
Bray, Sir Denys, 4, 8, 150, 151 (*note*), 175, 178 (*note*)
Brooke House, Hackney, 142, 143, 145, 198, 315
Brown, Sir Thomas, 150
Browne, Robert (Brownists), 279
Brutus, Lucius Junius, 89, 90
Buchanan, 332, 333, 334, 338, 346, 350, 359
Buckhurst, Lord (*see* Sackville, Thomas)
Bulleyne, Sir William, 275
Burbage, Richard, 126
Burleigh, Lord, *see* Cecil, William
Burgundy, 348, 349, 354
Burton, Francis, 144
Byting Satires (Hall), 88

C

Cæsar, Julius, 349
Campaspe, 48, 50, 51
Cardanus Comfort, 25
Carey, Sir George, 241
Carlyle, Thomas, 287 (*note*)
Castle Hedingham, 70, 76, 142, 158, 173, 183
Cecil, Anne, 20, 21, 94, 142, 188, 189, 249, 250, 254, 290, 301, 322, 323, 326, 332, 334
Cecil, Susanna, 301
Cecil, Thomas, 301
Cecil, William, 39, 95, 142, 174, 187, 188 (*note*), 189 (*note*), 206, 241, 243, 244, 248, 282, 290, 322, 326, 330, 331, 334, 339, 350, 363
Chapman, George :
General, 343, 357, 365
" Revenge of Bussy," 44, 109, 110, 113, 114, 117, 133, 134, 159 (*note*), 245, 283, 331
Biron Plays, 97, 221
" Bussy d'Ambois," 97, 114, 115, 118, 331
Allusions to Oxford as Shakespeare, 97–137
" Shadow of Night," 98–111
" Richard II," 100–3
" Love's Labour's Lost," 103–4
"Midsummer Night's Dream," 105–8, 110–11
" Venus and Adonis," 111
" Coronet for his Mistress Philosophy," 112, 154, 371, 372
References to Oxford as :
" Upstart Crow," 119, 120, 121
" Tiger's Heart," 123, 124, 131
The actor Shakespeare, 125–9
" Amorous Zodiac," 135
" De Guiana," 135
In " Achilles' Shield," 136, 137
Chapman, George—*continued* :
Chapman and the Sonnets, 160–72
" To Harriots " and Oxford in the Sonnets, 177–81
Charles IX, 220, 278, 290, 340, 341, 352, 361
Chaucer Geoffrey, 357
Chelmsford, 173
Cheney, E. P., 206 (*note*)
Clare, St., 297
Clark, Mrs. Eva, 357
Coligny, Jaspar, 233, 340, 341, 346–62
" Comedy of Errors," *see* Shakespeare, William
Connes, Prof. G., 7, 9, 133, 209, 381
Conrad III, Emperor, 351
Cooper, E. W. Durrant, 275 (*note*), 277
Corambis, 188 (*note*), 189 (*note*), 322 (*note*), 326, 329
Coutance, 121
Cumberland, Earl of, 181
" Cymbeline," *see* Shakespeare, William
" Cynthia's Revels," 73
Cyprus, 317, 322, 323

D

Dale, Valentine, 224 (*note*)
Daniel (Poet), 150
Dark Lady, The, 246, 247 and *note*
Darnley, Lord, 242, 331, 332, 333, 338, 340, 347
D'Aubigné, 342, 346
Davies of Hereford, 43, 125, 126
Dawtrey, John, 212
Dawtrey, Captain Nicholas, 212, 363
Dekker, 84 (*note*)
Derby, Earl of, 137, 214, 215, 216, 221, 222, 239, 240
De Thou, 340, 341
Digges, 358, 373
Dixon, W. H., 249
Droeshout (Portrait), 273, 373

E

Earl's Colne, 76, 184, 186 (*note*), 190, 313
Eboli, Princess, 320
Echo Song, 73–4
Edinburgh, 331, 332
Edwards (Choirmaster), 48, 141
Eld, G., 144
Elizabeth of Austria, 278
Elizabeth of Valois, 281
Elizabeth, Queen, 49, 56, 57, 59, 64, 73, 79, 83, 107, 141, 176, 181, 186, 205, 206, 210, 213, 220, 224 (as Sylvia), 224–32, 240, 242, 257 (*note*), 272, 283, 288, 290, 291, 300, 302, 305, 307, 308, 323, 325, 328, 330
Elsinore, 328, 329
Elvetham Fête, 239, 240, 241, 274, 277, 281
"Endymion," 53, 59, 61, 66
Essex, Earl of, 102, 142 (*note*), 216, 319
Euphuists, 42, 47
Evans, 48

F

"Faery Queen," 186 (*note*)
"Famous Victories," 131, 211, 212, 375
Ferguson, Prof. A. S., 108 (*note*)
Ferrers, Lord, 346
Ferrys, Edward, 48, 141, 209
Fervaques, 272, 273 (*note*), 274
Field, Henry, 67
Field, Richard, 67, 144 (*note*)
First Folio, 69, 147, 268 (*note*), 315, 369–73, 379
Flanders, 290, 292, 321, 323
Fletcher, Giles, 69
Florence, 220, 221, 290, 292
"Forsaken Man" (Poem), 34, 36
Fort, J. A., 153 (*note*)
Fortesque, Sir John, 206
Fox Bourne, P., 272, 273, 274
Francis of Assisi, 297
Frederick II of Denmark, 328 329
Froude, J. A., 203
Fuller, 168

G

Gascoigne, George, 16, 18, 173 and *note*, 174
Globe Theatre, 202, 261, 377
Golding, Arthur, 233, 348, 349, 350, 352, 354, 355, 359, 374, 375
Gollancz, Sir Israel, 235, 288, 379
"Gorboduc," 15, 239, 240, 241
Gray, Arthur, 219
Gray, Lady Catherine, 239, 240, 241
Greene, Robert, 47, 67, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 134, 146, 193, 212, 245, 253, 371, 372
Greenwood, Sir George, 2, 216
Gripper, 355
Grosart, Edward, 114 (*note*)
Gryffen, Margery, 140
Guise, family of, 331, 340, 342, 347, 351, 352, 361

H

Hackney, 15, 140, 142, 190, 282, 344, 364, 376, 381
Hall, Joseph, 186
Hall, William, 139, 140, 141, 143, 144, 145, 147, 151, 157 and *note*, 170
"Hamlet," *see* Shakespeare, William
Hamlet Saga, 89, 90
Harris, Frank, 23
Harrison, G. B., 9, 180
Harriots, 179, 180, 181, 184 (*note*)
Harsnett, 344
Harwich, 324
Hatton, Sir, Christopher, 16, 70, 186, 202, 272, 278, 374

Harvey, Gabriel, 47, 49, 114 and *note*, 115, 116 (*note*), 117, 121, 129, 221, 245, 262, 271, 310 (*note*), 356, 357, 358, 378
Henry III (of France), 215, 220, 235, 278, 340 (*note*), 342, 361
Henry IV (of France), 215, 220, 222, 235 (*note*), 264, 312, 346, 356, 359, 360, 361, 364 (*note*)
" Henry V," *see* Shakespeare, William
" Henry VI," *see* Shakespeare, William
Henry VIII, 327
Henslowe, 215
Herbert, William, Earl of Pembroke, 214, 370
Haywood, Jasper, 277
Holinshed (Chronicles), 341, 345, 347, 349, 353
Holland, Captain Hubert, 4, 235, 236, 245, 248, 279, 280, 281, 283, 286, 288, 301, 302, 311, 321, 326, 327, 329, 330, 382
Howard, Henry (*see* Earl of Surrey)
Howard, Lord Henry, 232, 235, 312
" Hundreth Sundrie Flowres," 13, 16–18, 19, 173, 202
Hunnis, 48
Hunsden, Lord, 241

I

Ignoto (Oxford), 65

J

James I (of England), 181, 206, 241, 242, 331, 337, 339, 342, 359
Jeanne de Navarre (Jeanne d'Albret), 359, 360
" Johannes Factotum," 128, 129, 130
John, Don, of Austria, 281, 317, 319
Jonson, Ben, 2, 3, 4, 69, 73, 103, 118, 128 (*note*), 133 *and note*, 168, 216, 245, 262, 370–3, 378

K

Killigrew, Henry, 25 (*note*)
" King John," *see* Shakespeare, William
" King Lear," *see* Shakespeare, William
King's Place, 282, 344

L

" Labeo," 88, 170, 186
La Môle, 272, 351
Laurence, Sir E. Durning, 6
Lavenham, 70
Lawrence, Basil, 125, 126, 127
Lee, Sir Sidney, 3, 9, 139, 146, 233
Lefranc, Prof., 214, 215, 239
Leicester, Earl of, 204, 250, 279, 323
Leland, 183
Lennox, Earl of, 338
Lepanto, Battle of, 317, 323
Lodge, 257; his " Rosalind," 260
Looney, J. T., 1, 2, 4, 13, 15 (*note*), 18, 19, 22, 23, 29, 31, 32, 33, 37, 42, 43, 44, 47, 50, 51, 52, 58, 61, 65, 77, 80, 96, 138, 163, 234, 250, 288 (*note*), 291, 309 (*note*), 369, 382
" Loss of Good Name " (Poem), 29, 234, 235
" Love's Labour's Lost," *see* Shakespeare, William
" Lucrece, Rape of," 34, 89–96
Lumley, Lord, 48, 141, 209, 358
Lyly, John, Poems of, 47–66, 228, 239 (*note*), 253, 254

M

" Macbeth," *see* Shakespeare, William

Macready, 301 (*note*)
Majendie, Rev. Severne A. A., 121 (*note*), 183 (*note*)
Markham, Sir Clement, 219 (*note*)
Marlowe, Christopher, 65, 131
Mary, Queen of Scots, 242, 290, 325, 331, 332, 334, 337, 338, 346
Marston, John, 88, 170
Masson, David, 152
Mathieu, Pierre, 342, 346
"Measure for Measure," *see* Shakespeare, William
Medici family, 310 (*note*), 316 (*note*), 331, 336, 337
Medici, Katherine of, 220, 278, 319, 339, 341, 342, 346, 349, 350, 352, 360
Meeres, Francis, 142 (*note*), 201, 209, 288
Melville, Sir James (Memoirs), 339
"Merchant of Venice," *see* Shakespeare, William
"Merry Wives of Windsor," *see* Shakespeare, William
"Midas," 63, 64, 66
"Midsummer Night's Dream," *see* Shakespeare, William
Milan, 224
Molyneux, Edmund, 273
Monmouth, Geoffrey of, 345
Moore Smith, Prof., 357
Montgomery, Earl of, 370
Montmorency (Marshall), 353
More, H., 153 (*note*)
Moulins, 354
"Much Ado About Nothing," *see* Shakespeare, William
Mudie, Alfred, 377 (*note*)
Munday, Anthony, 47, 253
Murray, 347, 363

N

Nash, 114 (*note*), 187
National Debt, 205, 206
Navarre, Court of, 214
Navarre, Henry of, *see* Henry IV
Negrone, Baptista, 248
Norreys, Edward, 321
Norris, Sir John, 204, 212, 321
Northumberland MS., 94, 216
Norton, Thomas, 15, 239, 240

O

"Old Bill," 212, 213
Orestes, 90
"Othello," *see* Shakespeare, William
Ovid, 67, 233, 348
Oxford, Countess of (*see* Trentham, Elizabeth)
Oxford, 17th Earl of, *see* Vere, Edward de
Oxford, 16th Earl of, 47, 71, 72

P

Padelford, F. Morgan, 14 (*note*), 16
Padua, 248
Paget, Lord, 1
Palermo, 32, 49, 160, 234
"Paradise of Dainty Devices," 13, 15, 18, 33, 38
Pembroke, Earl of, 214, 370
"Pericles," *see* Shakespeare, William
Percy, Lord, 181
Perez, Antonio, 317, 318, 319, 320
Philip II of Spain, 31, 239, 281, 317, 318, 320, 352
Phœnix Society, 3
Portland, Earl of, 153, 161 (*note*)
Pius V, Pope, 281

R

Radcliffe, Anthony, 143
Radcliffe, Thomas, 3rd Earl of Sussex,
Raleigh, Sir W., 1, 84 (*note*)
"Rape of Lucrece," *see* Shakespeare, William
Rendall, Dr. Gerald H.,
Revels Office, 49, 50

"Richard II," *see* Shakespeare, William
"Richard III," *see* Shakespeare, William
Richmond, Henry, Duke of, 14, 250
Rickert, Edith, 59, 83, 239, 241
Rizzio, David, 331, 333, 347
Robbie, H. J. L., 144, 145
Robertson, 97, 104 (*note*), 119 (*note*)
Robinson, William, 143
"Romeo and Juliet," *see* Shakespeare, William
Royden, Matthew, 98, 111, 169, 171 (*note*)
Rutland, Earl of, 7

S

Sackville, Thomas, 1, 14, 48, 141, 209, 239, 240, 274–9, 374
"Sapho and Phao," 49, 51, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58
Saunders, Mathew, 144
Seymour, Edward, Earl of Hertford, 239, 240, 241
Seymour, Lord, 25
Shakespeare, William:
"All's Well that Ends Well," 288–91, 294, 326, 334, 379
"Anthony and Cleopatra," 52
"As You Like It," 5, 23, 40, 79, 116 (*note*), 127, 134, 145 (*note*), 192 (*note*), 217, 244, 254, 257–71, 273, 283, 284, 292, 299, 300, 306, 312 (*note*), 313, 362, 364, 366 (*note*), 376, 377, 379
"Comedy of Errors," 31, 32, 44, 62, 66, 234–7, 238
"Cymbeline," 51, 64, 65, 66, 91
"Hamlet," 2, 4, 11, 16, 20, 21, 28, 30, 33–4, 37, 40, 41, 43, 44, 74, 95, 108, 114, 124, 125, 129, 130, 134, 154, 164, 165, 166, 187, 188, 189, 191, 199, 224, 227, 242, 244, 245, 269, 279, 288, 289, 290, 294, 296, 297, 303 (*note*), 305, 309 (*note*), 316, 325–34, 367, 368, 379
"Henry V," 66, 212
"Henry VI," 130, 131, 132, 212
"Henry VIII," 240
"King John," 212
"King Lear," 37, 44, 116 (*note*), 136 (*note*), 146, 168 (*note*), 191, 218, 233, 265, 271 (*note*), 300 (*note*), 306, 307, 315, 331, 344–68, 375, 379, 380, 381
"Love's Labour's Lost," 23, 24, 44, 47, 51, 58, 66, 86, 103, 105, 111, 135, 146, 166, 167, 170, 171, 201, 214, 215, 219–22, 223, 238, 246, 288, 290, 316 (*note*), 341, 356, 381
"Lucrece, Rape of," 43, 44, 89–96, 97, 100, 138, 216
"Macbeth," 46, 91, 92, 108, 131, 132, 136, 162, 166, 169, 191, 242, 312, 316, 334, 335, 343, 359
"Measure for Measure," 288, 294–7, 299, 334, 379
"Merchant of Venice," 159
"Merry Wives of Windsor," 5, 14, 47, 52, 53, 61, 66, 79, 213, 217, 249–56, 376, 379
"Midsummer Night's Dream," 18, 20, 35, 44, 58, 59 (*note*), 60, 61, 62, 66, 68, 73, 80, 81, 82, 85, 86, 93, 105, 106, 107, 108, 110, 194, 215, 235, 238–42, 336
"Much Ado About Nothing," 29, 77, 189, 281–7, 317, 379, 380
"Othello," 31, 44, 77, 94, 168 (*note*), 281, 316–24, 379, 380
"Pericles," 146, 380
"Richard II," 43, 100, 102, 103, 105, 108 (*note*), 115 (*note*), 126, 135, 166, 216, 285 (*note*)
"Richard III," 210, 216

Shakespeare, William—*contd.*:
"Romeo and Juliet," 19, 20, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 51, 74, 78 (*note*), 93, 128, 163, 164, 184 (*note*), 189, 190, 196 (*note*), 201, 218, 228, 231, 244, 246, 285 (*note*), 298–315, 338, 379, 380
"Sonnets":
Dedicatory page, 139
Identification of W. Hall, 140
To whom written, 142, 152–4
MS. of Sonnets and Meditations both found at Brooke House, 142–6
Baconian ciphers on dedicatory page, 147–9
Sir D. Bray's discovery of rhyme-linked order, 150–1
Parallels with Romeo and Juliet, 164, 190
Chapman and the Sonnets, 166–72, 180–1
"I bore the canopy," 176–8
Monuments of Oxford's ancestors, 182–6
Parallels with "Hamlet," 188–9, 192
Shakespeare's branded name, 192–4
Parallels with "Midsummer Night's Dream," 194–5
Shakespeare as "Will," 195–6
Parallels with "Taming of the Shrew," 197–8
"Taming of the Shrew," 44, 77, 197, 200, 228, 243–8
"Tempest," 147, 192 (*note*)
"Titus Andronicus," 58, 86, 214, 238
"Troilus and Cressida," 146, 192 (*note*), 380
"Twelfth Night," 14, 38–40, 42, 44, 49, 53, 54, 55, 66, 108, 114, 136, 142 (*note*), 160, 163, 166, 209 (*note*), 220, 228, 229, 240, 272–80, 326
Shakespeare, William—*contd.*:
"Two Gentlemen of Verona," 22, 23, 25 (*note*), 30, 38, 43, 44, 46, 63, 64, 66, 79, 223–233, 290, 348, 379
"Venus and Adonis," 41, 44, 45, 60, 67–97, 99, 110, 112, 138, 144 (*note*), 146, 170, 186, 225, 238, 243, 283, 305
"Winter's Tale," 152
Shaksper, William (of Stratford), 104, 109, 120, 123, 126, 127, 144 (*note*), 155, 158, 172, 187, 194, 200, 217, 219, 220, 243, 249, 254, 255, 260–3, 370, 373, 376, 377
Shaw, George Bernard, 7 (*note*)
Shrewsbury, Lord, 177 (*note*), 187, 225
Sidney, Sir Philip, 14, 42, 47, 48, 80, 114 (*note*), 150, 165 (*note*), 166 (*note*), 202, 240, 250, 251, 258 (*note*), 272, 273, 275, 278, 330, 345
Sidney, Lady Mary, 28
Siena, 172, 299
Simier, 241
Smart, Dr. J. Semple, 122, 123, 124, 128, 130, 236, 247
Smithson, E. W., 216
Somers, Will, 327
"Sonnets," *see* Shakespeare, William
Southampton, Earl of, 139, 142, 200
Southwell, Robert, 143, 144, 145
Spanish War, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 212, 213
"Speculum Tuscanismi," 114 (*note*), 115, 116, 117, 129, 221, 271, 310 (*note*), 356
Spenser, Edmund, 42, 186 (*note*), 221, 257 (*note*), 258, 272
St. Bartholomew, Massacre of, 220, 221, 272, 278, 326, 339, 340, 345, 360
St. Germain L'Auxerrois, 341
Stirling, Mrs., 301 (*note*)
Stopes, Mrs. 139
Stowe's Annals, 225
Strange, Lord, 181

Strindberg, August, 129 (*note*)
Surrey, Earl of, 3, 14, 18, 45, 249, 374
Sussex, Earl of, 214, 241
Swinburne, A. C., 97, 98
Sylvester, 357, 358
Syracuse, 234, 236

T

Talbot, Gilbert, 225
"Taming of the Shrew," *see* Shakespeare, William
Tarquin, 89, 90, 91, 92
Tassoni, 320, 321
"Tempest," *see* Shakespeare, William
Tennecker, T., 329
Theobald, B. G., 147, 148, 149, 216
Thorpe, Thomas, 139, 157
"Titus Andronicus," *see* Shakespeare, William
Tottel, 13
Traverse, S. Smith, 151
Trentham, Elizabeth (Countess of Oxford), 21 (*note*), 142, 143, 163, 195, 198 (*note*), 200, 219, 301, 308, 311, 344, 381
Trentham, Sir Thomas, 142
"Troilus and Cressida," *see* Shakespeare, William
Trussell, Elizabeth, 302
"Twelfth Night," *see* Shakespeare, William
"Two Gentlemen of Verona," *see* Shakespeare, William

U

Umbria, 297, 298

V

Valois, Elizabeth de, 318, 319, 352
Valois, Marguerite de, 220, 316 (*note*), 341, 360
Vaux, Lord, 13, 15, 18, 45, 143, 323, 374
Vavasour, Anne, 20, 79, 80, 94, 309, 332
Venice, 271, 281, 317, 320, 322, 323
"Venus and Adonis," *see* Shakespeare, William
Ver (River), 121
Ver (Spring), 135
Vere, Aubrey de, 183, 185, 186, 351
Vere, Bridget de, 370
Vere, Edward de :
  As Hamlet, 2, 4
  Connection with Courtier Poets, 3–15
  Connection with "Hundreth Sundrie Flowres" and Gascoigne, 16, 17
  Contributes to "Paradise of Dainty Devices," 18
  Relations with Anne Vavasour, 20–1
  Oxford's poems and Shakespeare, 13–46
  Connection with Bedingfield, 24–29
  "The Crown of Bays," 34, 35
  Development of style, Oxford to Shakespeare, 44–6
  Connections with Lyly, 47–50
  As author of lyrics in Lyly's plays, 66
  The Boar motive, 70–2
  Relations with Queen Elizabeth, 78–80, 82–4, 85, 225–32
  Was Oxford "Labeo?" 87–9
  Commented on in Chapman's poems, 97–139
  As "Shake-scene," 120–2, 132
  As actor in his own plays, 121, 128, 310, 390, 391
  As "Johannes Factotum," 129, 130
  As author of the Sonnets, 138–99
  Connections with Hackney and "Mr. W. H.," 139–49
  As Bearer of the Canopy, 176–8

Vere, Edward de—*continued :*
As " Will," 195, 196
Receives £1,000 a year from secret service fund, 207, 208, 217, 236
Head of Committee for producing Drama as National Propaganda, 209–15
Interest in Medici family, 220–2
Captured by pirates, 224
Brings scented gloves to Queen Elizabeth, 224, 225
Travels abroad, 234, 248
As a boy at Windsor, 250
As Fenton in " Merry Wives," 251, 254
As (Ox)-Ford in " Merry Wives," 252–3
As Jaques-Touchstone, 257–63
As the slandered Orlando in " As You Like It," 264–5
Concealed author of " As You Like It," 266–9
As Benedick-Don Juan, 281–7
As Bertram, 288–93
As Duke and Lucio in " Measure for Measure," 294–6
Interest in Italy, 298–9
As Romeo and concealed author of " Romeo and Juliet," 299–315
Connection with Othello, 281, 316–324
In Flanders, 321, 322
As Othello, 323
As Commissioner at trial of Mary, Queen of Scots, 334
Grieved by Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 339, 345
As Axiophilus (Shakespeare), 357–9
As Kent in " King Lear," 362–8
Oxford in preliminaries to First Folio, 370–3
Vere, Edward de—*continued :*
Recapitulation of his case, 374–82
Vere, Elizabeth de, 240, 370
Vere, Henry de, 142, 151, 152, 153, 175, 180, 187, 190, 200, 208 (*note*), 219, 301
Vere, Horatio de, 110, 113, 192
Vere, John de (15th Earl), 184, 320
Vere, Robert de, 369
Vere, Susan de, 370, 371, 372
Vernon, Elizabeth, Countess of Essex, 332
Verona, 224
Vervins, Peace of, 346, 361

## W

Walsh, Percy, 273
Walsingham, Sir F., 329
Ward, Capt. B. M., 4, 16, 17, 18, 332, 375, 381
Ward, Col. B. R., 4, 125, 139, 140, 141, 149, 382
Ward, Rev. John, 217
Warwick, Earl of, 48
" W. H.," Mr., *see* Hall, William
Whitehead, L. H. Haydon, 48
Wilkins, George, 147
" Will," 195, 196, 308
Williams, Friswood, 344
Wilnecote, 244 (*note*), 245
Wincot, 244 (*note*)
Windsor, 14, 213, 249, 250
Winstanley, Lilian, 4, 257 (*note*), 263, 281, 317, 319, 320, 321, 330, 331, 332, 333, 337, 338, (*note*), 339, 345, 347, 359, 363
" Winter's Tale," *see* Shakespeare, William
" Woman's Changeableness " (Poem), 40, 41, 77, 78, 82, 86, 154
Wyatt, Sir Thomas, 13, 16

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